IN THE GRIP OF LIFE

BY

KNUT HAMSUN

A
Gift
to
The
Colorado College
by

Sewell Thomas

CHARLES
LEAMING
TUTT
LIBRARY

A good book is the precious life blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. —John Milton

WITHDRAWN

In the Grip of Life

The Works of

KNUT HAMSUN

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1920

HUNGER [*Sult*] *Translated by George Egerton. With an Introduction by Edwin Björkman.*

GROWTH OF THE SOIL [*Markens Grøde*] *Translated, with an essay on Hamsun, by W. W. Worster.*

PAN *Translated by W. W. Worster. With an introduction by Edwin Björkman.*

SHALLOW SOIL [*Ny Jord*] *Translated, with an introductory essay, by Carl Christian Hyllested.*

DREAMERS [*Svaermere*] *Translated by W. W. Worster.*

WANDERERS [*Under Høstjaernen* and *En Vandrer Spiller med Sordin.*] *Translated by W. W. Worster. With an introduction by Edwin Björkman.*

VICTORIA *Translated by A. G. Chater.*

CHILDREN OF THE AGE [*Børn av Tiden.*] *Translated by J. S. Scott.*

IN THE GRIP OF LIFE *Translated by Graham and Tristan Rawson.*

In preparation:

THE VILLAGE OF SEGELFOSS [*Segelfoss By.*]

NEW YORK: ALFRED · A · KNOPF

In the Grip of Life

by

Knut Hamsun

Authorized English Version by
Graham and Tristan Rawson

New York
Alfred · A · Knopf
1924

COPYRIGHT, 1924, BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

Published, February, 1924

All dramatic rights reserved

[*Original Title:*—Livet Ivold]

Set up, electrotyped, and printed by the Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., Binghamton, N. Y.
Paper furnished by W. F. Etherington & Co., New York.
Bound by H. Wolff Estate, New York.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PT
8950
.H3
L52
1924

Characters

Gihle

Juliane (*his wife*)

Per Bast (*a rich rancher from the Argentine*)

Alexander Blumenschøn

Aron Gislesen (*a dealer in antiques*)

Lieutenant Lynum

Fanny Norman

Teodor

A Negro Boy

Frederiksen (*a musician*)

Two Maids at Gihle's

Irene (*maid at Blumenschøn's*)

The Manager of the Hotel Bristol

Servants

Two Messengers

Musicians

Act I.

Act I.

[*A Room in Blumenschøn's House. There are doors on the right and left and one at the back. The door on the right leads to the kitchen. It is an autumn afternoon. Irene, the maid, is discovered dusting the furniture and ornaments. Blumenschøn comes in, holding a paper; he stops and looks at it. He has a slight limp.*]

Blumenschøn. Be careful, Irene.

Irene. Yes, sir.

Blumenschøn. It's all very well to say that.

Irene. You told me to be quick about it.

Blumenschøn. Yes, I did. The man may be here at any moment. I mean the man who wants to buy these things.

Irene. Are you going to sell everything?

Blumenschøn. Mind that clock! It's the only one of all my clocks that will go.

Irene. I'm not shaking it.

Blumenschøn. Well, I'm nervous about it. It must be going properly when the man comes.

Irene. Why are you selling everything?

Blumenschøn. That's nothing to do with you. I've already told you I'm going to South America. Who asked you to find out?

Irene. But what shall I say if anyone *does* ask?

Blumenschøn. Who's going to? My fiancée knows all about it.

Irene. Mrs. Gihle did ask me to-day, when I went across with your letter.

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle? You can say I'm going day after to-morrow.

Irene. Yes, sir.

Blumenschøn. Yes. Say day after to-morrow. Then there will be no reason for Mrs. Gihle to ask you anything further.

Irene. She seemed disappointed you couldn't call and see them to-day.

Blumenschøn. Haven't you finished yet? I should have liked to have gone to see them this evening, but I didn't want to leave you here alone, Irene. I feel rather worried about all this.

Irene. Shall I wipe the chandelier?

Blumenschøn. No. Get on a chair and blow the dust off it. [*There is a ring at the bell.*] That must be him.

[*The maid goes out through the door at the back into the hall. Blumenschøn, standing on tiptoe, blows at the chandelier with all his strength. Gislesen in shown in. He bows.*]

Gislesen. I hope I'm not interrupting you.

Blumenschøn. Not at all. Won't you sit down?

Gislesen. If you'll permit me I would rather have a look at the things. [*He puts down his case.*]

Blumenschøn. Here's the catalogue. [*Gives him a paper.*]

Gislesen. [*Puts on his glasses and glances at the catalogue. Then he looks at Blumenschøn over the rims.*] So we're not doing any exchanging to-day?

Blumenschøn. No. I want to do some selling to-day. I'm going abroad.

Gislesen. Permanently?

Blumenschøn. Only for a few years. My fiancée's father insists on my making more money before he'll take me into his business.

Gislesen. I hope we shall get you back again before long.

Blumenschøn. As you see, there are some valuable things here.

Gislesen. Yes. I see. But I do hope we shall get you back soon. [*He begins to look round the room.*] You're right. There are some valuable things here. You got them from me.

Blumenschøn. It doesn't matter who I got them from. Look at this bureau. That's it. [*He points to the catalogue.*]

Gislesen. Hm. It's some years since we started doing business together.

Blumenschøn. I suppose it is.

Gislesen. Yes,—you've done very well—it's exactly two years. We began about the time Mrs. Gihle married.

Blumenschøn. I've marked the price against everything, and I've even written out receipts. I suppose you've got the money with you? You see I'm going abroad day after to-morrow.

Gislesen. Yes. You've got on splendidly. You began

with practically nothing, and after two years you've made a round sum. You must be a genius.

Blumenschøn. Perhaps. But we haven't time to talk about that now. To begin with, the friend I'm travelling with will be here almost at once. I've just had a telegram from him. He may come at any time. And anyhow, all these things will have to be taken out of the house at once. I've only paid the rent up to now.

Gislesen. We needn't take long about it. Since we began doing business together you have done extraordinarily well. How did you manage it? I hope you haven't been swindling me?

Blumenschøn. Because I'm going abroad I suppose you think you can talk to me like that?

Gislesen. Oh, no! I don't say you *have* been swindling me! But you've done some very good deals with me, from time to time. Don't you think so? Two years ago you bought that clock from me for six crowns. And then I bought it back again for fifty.

Blumenschøn. But I'd spent a lot of money on it in the meantime. It looked in a bad state, so I cleaned the case. And the clockmaker had to see to it. It still goes. [*He starts the clock again and points to all the others, which have stopped.*] They're all going.

Gislesen. I kept it two months, and then exchanged it with you for a flute. So the clock was yours again.

Blumenschøn. It wasn't a bad flute. Not bad at all. Shall I light the lamp? [*He lights it.*]

Gislesen. But it so happened that I found a rich pur-

chaser for that clock. So I bought it back again. What did I give you for it that time?

Blumenschøn. I don't remember. But the price of antiques always goes up, you know.

Gislesen. A hundred and twenty-five crowns.

Blumenschøn. Then I didn't exactly make you a present of it.

Gislesen. And the purchaser, as a matter of fact, was a lady of your acquaintance——

Blumenschøn. As a matter of fact she wasn't.

Gislesen. And she sold it again for next to nothing. Wasn't it eighteen crowns you gave for it the last time you bought it from me?

Blumenschøn. I don't remember. But it's a good old piece.

Gislesen. [*Looking at the paper.*] And now I see you have put it down here for a hundred and sixty-five crowns.

Blumenschøn. I needn't point out to you that it's a fine example, bronze gilt, with marble pillars. You know that as well as I do.

Gislesen. So you'll have made several hundred crowns on that clock, if I buy it from you now. Not to mention the flute.

Blumenschøn. Oh, yes! You mustn't forget the flute! You'll get a very good price for that.

Gislesen. I'll make you a present of the flute.

Blumenschøn. What?

Gislesen. As a parting gift. I'll bring it along to-night.

Blumenschøn. No, thank you. I accept no presents from

you. And if you won't come to business you had better go.

Gislesen. I will come to business. We've been dealing with practically everything in the room in the same way as with this clock. You own all these things and you've made a large sum of money as well. I must have been extremely stupid.

Blumenschøn. I should have thought you must have made something at every transaction. You had your buyers.

Gislesen. [*Looking at him over his glasses.*] Yes. Otherwise I should have been a fool indeed.

Blumenschøn. I suppose you would. And now perhaps we can get this deal done.

Gislesen. This deal? [*Shakes his head.*] I am afraid the things are too expensive for me. That's a fine chandelier you've got there.

Blumenschøn. Isn't it?

Gislesen. If I could only sell my house in the country, I should be able to do business with you.

Blumenschøn. Haven't you sold it yet?

Gislesen. No. If I had, I really could trade in antiques. I could extend my business, and take in a partner. I should want a clever man. Do you know of anyone?

Blumenschøn. I?

Gislesen. I thought perhaps you might. The property is extensive, with timber and fields. A country house for a rich man. Why won't old Gihle buy it?

Blumenschøn. Have you offered it to him?

Gislesen. Many times. I think his wife would like it. Couldn't *you* get Gihle to buy it?

Blumenschøn. I?

Gislesen. Through his wife. I should have thought——

Blumenschøn. You said I'd bought everything here from you. But I didn't get this chandelier from you. Look at it. It's a very good one. There it is. [*He points to the catalogue.*] I got it at a sale. By pure good luck.

Gislesen. You have added everything up to a round sum of three thousand crowns, I see.

Blumenschøn. Yes. That won't be too much. I've got something else over here. [*He takes the lamp over to the left-hand side of the room.*]

Gislesen. That's a very good etching.

Blumenschøn. Yes, it is. You could hardly have been aware of the value of that when you sold it to me. Then there's this large bureau——

Gislesen. I was thinking whether I mightn't be able to sell that for you. Perhaps Mrs. Gihle would buy it. What do you want for the etching?

Blumenschøn. [*Looking it up in the catalogue.*] Here it is. Twenty-five crowns.

Gislesen. [*Taking the lamp and inspecting the etching.*] Twenty-five crowns. [*He nods and puts down the lamp.*] I'll give you that.

Blumenschøn. What?

Gislesen. You're right. I can hardly have been aware of its value in that state.

Blumenschøn. Is there anything particular about it?

Gislesen. Oh, no. But as you've priced the whole collection at three thousand crowns, I really ought to give you a hundred crowns for it. Otherwise we shall never reach your total.

Blumenschøn. What? Is that etching——? Have I made a mistake? [*He picks up the lamp and examines it again.*]

Gislesen. Oh, no. You've made no mistake.

Blumenschøn. I think I have. This is a most valuable etching. You must admit it. Otherwise it will look—— [*He comes back with the lamp.*]

Gislesen. Let's be quite clear about this. Three thousand for the whole lot. Is that what you want? [*Nods.*] Well, I'll give it to you.

Blumenschøn. Really? Very well—but I can't include the etching.

Gislesen. Now please don't start that again. You're always making these exceptions.

Blumenschøn. Three thousand—without the etching. . . . Otherwise I won't sell. That's all I have to say.

Gislesen. Oh, very well. Rather than let the whole thing fall through, you can keep the etching.

Blumenschøn. You mean you'll—— But have you got the money?

Gislesen. Yes. If you'll sign this receipt and—— [*He takes out a paper.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Suddenly.*] No, I won't do that. As you seem so willing to give me three thousand, I shall have to think it over. Come back again to-morrow.

Gislesen. [*Astonished.*] But you are to keep the etching!

Blumenschøn. That means the etching is of no value. It must be something else. There's something behind all this.

Gislesen. Is it true that you had some other dealers in antiques up here, and that they offered you a few hundred crowns for the lot?

Blumenschøn. That's no business of yours. I'm not going to sell the things to-night.

Gislesen. And I'm not coming back to-morrow. [*He picks up his case.*]

Blumenschøn. Now listen to me. If there is any one piece among these things that is really valuable, you ought to tell me which it is. If you don't, you're dishonest.

Gislesen. You think because I deal in antiques that you can talk like that to me, do you? [*He crosses to the door.*]

Blumenschøn. Give me the money. I'll sign the receipt. [*He begins to write.*] The things will have to stay here till to-morrow, though. You can't take them away to-night.

[*The bell rings. Blumenschøn will not give the receipt until he has the money, and Gislesen will not part with the money until he has the receipt. The one clock that made any pretence of going has now come to a standstill. Mrs. Gihle enters through the centre door.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Oh, excuse me, I only—— [*Gislesen snatches the receipt and hands the notes to Blumenschøn with a bow. He takes up his case.*] Oh, is that you, Gislesen? Are you here on business?

Gislesen. Yes. A very costly business indeed. May I come and see you one of these days and show you a bureau?

Mrs. Gihle. If you like. But it won't be much use. I've spent all my money to-day.

Gislesen. [*Bowing.*] Oh, surely you have some left?

Mrs. Gihle. No. I haven't. My husband gave me a five-hundred-crown note this morning, because it's his birthday. But I gave it away at once.

Blumenschøn. To whom?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't see why I shouldn't tell you. There is a Benevolent Fund for Musicians here. I handed the money over to them.

Blumenschøn. I know you always have taken an interest in musicians and the like.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. Because I was a singer myself once. And Fredriksen, who is one of them, is an old friend of mine. He's a very clever man. He's almost converted me to Socialism.

Blumenschøn. To what?

Mrs. Gihle. You heard what I said. It may very well be that we ought to share what we have with others. And with these people, of course, I feel quite at home. I am one of them. I know it's no good my telling you about it. You're such an aristocrat! [*To Gislesen.*] What do you think?

Gislesen. I think as you do. Everyone ought to share what he has. If they did, perhaps some of the good things of this world might come my way.

Mrs. Gihle. Come your way? You're a rich man with a business in town and an estate in the country.

Gislesen. Yes. A beautiful country house. Are you sure you wouldn't like to buy it?

Mrs. Gihle. You'd better see my husband about it again. It's his birthday to-day and he might——

Gislesen. If you advise me to, I——

Mrs. Gihle. Come later in the evening. He's engaged now. In a couple of hours' time. [*Gislesen makes a deep bow and goes out.*] I only wanted—— You must excuse my coming——

Blumenschøn. [*Pulling out the drawers of the bureau.*] You must pardon me. I'm very busy. This dealer in antiques you recommended to me, is a thorough scoundrel.

Mrs. Gihle. Gislesen? What nonsense!

Blumenschøn. A thorough scoundrel.

Mrs. Gihle. Well, don't let's talk about him. I've come to find out——

Blumenschøn. But I sent the maid over to you with a note.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. But don't you know what to-day is? It's my husband's birthday. You really must come over to us.

Blumenschøn. Not this year. Don't let's talk about your husband. How old is he to-day? Eighty or ninety?

Mrs. Gihle. What nonsense! He's only seventy. You shouldn't speak of him like that. He wouldn't harm anyone.

Blumenschøn. I know you call him "Father." Won't you sit down?

Mrs. Gihle. May I? Just for a moment. [*She unfastens her coat. She is in evening dress.*] I'm so hot. I ran up your stairs. We've just finished dinner. They're having coffee now. It wasn't easy for me to get away.

Blumenschøn. Isn't he in the habit of taking a nap after dinner?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, he is. But I couldn't get him to do it to-day.

Blumenschøn. No. Of course he's the last person to need it. Oh! These old people!

Mrs. Gihle. Now they're sitting there, all by themselves, over their coffee. He asked after you several times.

Blumenschøn. You see, I'm too busy. As I was telling you, this man, this scoundrel, is buying all these things. I named my price and he said he'd pay it—but he's trying to swindle me all the same.

Mrs. Gihle. Are you as easily swindled as that? Haven't you been through the things carefully and fixed the price yourself? Of course if you've got any jewels, or articles set with precious stones you should have them valued by an expert.

Blumenschøn. There is something here that is exceedingly valuable. If I could only find out what it is! But I've managed to get time to make a search for it. Come and help me, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. Juliane?

Blumenschøn. Did I say Juliane? I didn't mean to. You mustn't mind if I——

Mrs. Gihle. Oh! I don't mind.

Blumenschøn. Don't let's start that all over again.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Quickly.*] No, no. They're sitting over their coffee, waiting.

Blumenschøn. I see. Is Lieutenant Lynum there?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes.

Blumenschøn. Can't you teach him to play some game or other with your husband?

Mrs. Gihle. No.

Blumenschøn. That was why I introduced him to you. I know you're bored, Juliane; but I can't come over, because I am expecting Per Bast any minute. [*He looks at his watch. He finds it has stopped, and winds it up.*] Why did you marry that old man? You see the consequences now—boredom and unhappiness. Of course, you're rich——

Mrs. Gihle. The consequences are not what you think, Alexander. I'm not a fool. I only *could* marry—well.

Blumenschøn. You were very extravagant when you were a singer.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes and no. But I thought of the future.

Blumenschøn. A girl shouldn't sell herself to make her future secure.

Mrs. Gihle. No. But a woman must. I was over thirty. You smile? You think I mean over forty? I wasn't. But I was—well over thirty. And I didn't sell myself. I've never believed in being stupid. So I took Gihle. What do you think I ought to have done? On the stage I learned——

Blumenschøn. On the stage?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I've sung in cabarets all over the world. I learned there that nobody gives a girl flowers for nothing. I was tired of all that. Now I buy my own flowers. I just ask how much they cost, pay it, and get into my carriage again. As a matter of fact it isn't really a carriage, but a cab. Why should we have a carriage? We've no country house, so we don't need a carriage.

Blumenschøn. I should have thought you could get a country house easily enough if you wanted one.

Mrs. Gihle. Perhaps. I dare say. But I don't want it now. I should have liked it once, so that you could have come and seen me there; but now you're going away, it's no use.

Blumenschøn. You've no use for me either, now you have your old man—whom you call "father." [*He laughs.*]

Mrs. Gihle. He's very generous. He gave me a five-hundred-crown note this morning, because it was his birthday.

Blumenschøn. A five-hundred-crown note! That means about the same to him that a crown means to me.

Mrs. Gihle. It's of more value. And I spent it well.

Blumenschøn. Yes. You gave it away to some mountebanks. What did your husband say to that?

Mrs. Gihle. He said it would do about as much good as if I'd thrown it into the sea. But I don't think he's right.

Blumenschøn. It's all make-believe with you artists! You only gave that money away to make a benevolent gesture. That's all.

Mrs. Gihle. Well. Suppose I did? What harm is there in that?

Blumenschøn. I'd never do such a thing. You must take me as I am. I imitate nobody. I am myself. I think of myself. I am strong. An Egoist.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. You think of yourself. You are selfish and strong.

Blumenschøn. And you? To think that you have turned Socialist in your—— [*He stops.*]

Mrs. Gihle. In my old age—yes.

Blumenschøn. In your married years.

Mrs. Gihle. What am I to do? I don't intend to die yet, and I certainly can't settle down to reading for a degree.

Blumenschøn. Why don't you turn to Religion?

Mrs. Gihle. In spite of everything I don't joke about that. But I don't turn to it.

Blumenschøn. You're a typical woman. Now come and help me look for that valuable object.

Mrs. Gihle. I can only stay for a few minutes. [*She takes off her coat.*]

Blumenschøn. You needn't take anything else off. I know you are beautiful. [*He locks the kitchen door.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What are you doing that for?

Blumenschøn. I don't want the maid to come in and see you. After all, I'm engaged.

Mrs. Gihle. Are you so struck with me?

Blumenschøn. Don't be such a tempter. Have you asked my fiancée's permission?

Mrs. Gihle. You know I'm not a woman's woman. I don't like my own sex. [*She starts opening the kitchen door.*]

Blumenschøn. What are you doing?

Mrs. Gihle. Nothing. And this little lady of yours—— Do you know what she's like? I'll show you. [*Mimicking her.*] Now I've made you furious.

Blumenschøn. Not at all. At your age you have the privilege of being sincere.

Mrs. Gihle. At my age? I'm not so sure. But I do

know that you're not the least fond of your fiancée. That's all nonsense. I know what it is you're fond of.

Blumenschøn. Unfortunately I'm still fond of you.

Mrs. Gihle. It's her father's business you're fond of. You want to be independent; you want to be made a partner. What kind of business has he got?

Blumenschøn. At least he's got a daughter and I'm to marry her. And what of it?

Mrs. Gihle. You needn't think I came here to make any proposals to you.

Blumenschøn. No. You should have done that a number of years ago.

Mrs. Gihle. Do you mean to tell me I'm as old as all that?

Blumenschøn. Nothing of the kind. But if you say it yourself, I shan't dare deny it.

Mrs. Gihle. It's only a matter of words. They're of no account. But you know as well as I do that this fiancée of yours is nothing but a child with blond hair.

Blumenschøn. I admit she's not very grown up in some ways. That's why she's not asked to your house. She has her faults: she is a little childish, she is too inexperienced for this world, and she is innocent. Still, those are all faults on the right side.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Sighing.*] Yes. And all my faults, unfortunately, are on the wrong side.

Blumenschøn. I still daren't contradict you. [*Pause.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Alexander. Now we're quarrelling again.

Blumenschøn. Yes. If you hadn't come it wouldn't have happened.

Mrs. Gihle. I came here to find out if you really were going away. I can't believe it. I certainly don't think Per Bast will come. [*She takes off her shawl.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Picking up a telegram from the table.*] You don't think he'll come? He has come. According to this telegram.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Reading it.*] How long will you be away?

Blumenschøn. A few years.

Mrs. Gihle. How old shall I be by then?

Blumenschøn. You will never be old. And I can't believe that you would deceive me while I am away.

Mrs. Gihle. How indifferent you are! You usedn't to be like that long ago. Quite the opposite.

Blumenschøn. I'm going to ask you not to deceive me while I'm away.

Mrs. Gihle. I? Am I likely to do such a thing. But if I did, I wouldn't be cheating you now, would I? You're going away for ever. Such is life.

Blumenschøn. Don't speak like that, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. You know my destiny? Things go downhill with women like me. You know I used to say I thought it would all end up with a nigger. [*She laughs.*] It's quite true. But I'm neither old nor ugly.

Blumenschøn. You? I can't take my eyes off you. [*He goes towards the kitchen door.*] Now help me look for this treasure.

Mrs. Gihle. What kind of man is Per Bast now?

Blumenschøn. Now? Did you know him before?

Mrs. Gihle. No. That was my mistake.

Blumenschøn. Well, I can't tell you, because I haven't

seen him for eight years. But if you'll stay he'll be here in a minute.

Mrs. Gihle. May I? I should so like to see him.

Blumenschøn. Is that why you came?

Mrs. Gihle. Nonsense. Do you think I telephoned to his hotel?

Blumenschøn. [*Locks the kitchen door again and goes to Mrs. Gihle.*] I don't know. I can't make this out at all.

Mrs. Gihle. Eight years, did you say? [*She proceeds to open the door once more.*] Then he must be old, too old.

Blumenschøn. Don't unlock the door. The maid might come in and see you like that.

Mrs. Gihle. And you're engaged!

Blumenschøn. I wish you wouldn't keep talking about it. Yes, of course he's an old man, is Per Bast. But I am young. How beautiful you are, Juliane, your neck and——

Mrs. Gihle. You're wrong, Alexander. I didn't come here to let you make love to me.

Blumenschøn. [*Looking at her; abruptly.*] You oughtn't to wait any longer. You have guests at home.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Listening.*] Yes. But Per Bast is coming now. Can't you hear the car? [*She picks up a mirror and begins to tidy herself. A car drives up and stops outside the house.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Goes out to the left and comes back again immediately.*] How did you know it was he?

Mrs. Gihle. I didn't telephone to his hotel.

Blumenschøn. You must have. But that's your business. You can't stay here now.

Mrs. Gihle. Why not? I'll behave very nicely. I'll be a credit to you.

Blumenschøn. He's going to be my chief. I daren't let you stay. Put on your cloak.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Doing so.*] But I can't meet him on the stairs.

Blumenschøn. Yes, you can. No, you can't. My fiancée is sure to hear about this. Look! Go out this way. [*He opens the kitchen door; a bell rings.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Why can't I see him? I promise to behave! [*She goes out. Bast is shown in. He is a clean-shaven, but has longish hair now going grey. He wears a wide-brimmed sombrero, grey in colour and adorned with little brass ornaments round the brim. He does not take off his hat.*]

Bast. Good afternoon. [*Shaking hands.*] I'm punctual, am I not?

Blumenschøn. I'm very glad to see you.

Bast. [*Looking round.*] I thought you had a visitor. I saw a carriage standing outside, and the man said it was—Mrs. Gihle's carriage.

Blumenschøn. Oh! Very likely. Won't you sit down?

Bast. That was a nice girl who let me in. Was that your maid? You have a lot of things here. I'm afraid our place in the Argentine is very different.

Blumenschøn. I've sold everything here. They'll be taken away in a day or two.

Bast. [*Looking at the things.*] Well, it's many a day since we met. You are still dark, but I'm grey. You've half a warehouse full of stuff here. What's this?

Blumenschøn. It's a Nargileh, a Turkish pipe.

Bast. A pipe? But it's set with diamonds!

Blumenschøn. Is it?

Bast. Yes. Let's get the dust off it first. [*He gets a mirror and tries the stones on it.*] You see, they scratch it all right. It's a devilish good pipe; studded with precious stones!

Blumenschøn. [*Snatching it.*] Yes. It's a pretty good pipe. What do you think it's worth?

Bast. [*Looking at him.*] I should have thought you'd have known that.

Blumenschøn. Of course I know it's valuable. But I never thought—I took the stones to be coloured glass.

Bast. You would. [*He puts the pipe away.*] Still, that doesn't matter. [*He goes on.*] What I want to ask you is, are you ready to start?

Blumenschøn. Yes. Whenever you like. [*He picks up the pipe and looks at it, then wipes it.*]

Bast. I've got some things with me that I'm going to hand over to the Museum. Otherwise we could have taken the night train and crossed to Denmark.

Blumenschøn. Just as you like.

Bast. That woman—what's her name now? Mrs. Gihle? Is she in there? [*Points to the door on the left.*]

Blumenschøn. Certainly not! You know I'm engaged.

Bast. What kind of person is she?

Blumenschøn. Surely you've heard about her. She used to be a singer and was very well known at the time. Her name was Juliane.

Bast. What? *The* Juliane?

Blumenschøn. Yes.

Bast. Really! The beautiful Juliane? Is she married? Who is this Gihle?

Blumenschøn. The wealthy Gihle, who inherited the mills. The perpetual bachelor. He's seventy to-day. That's why she came here—to ask me to the birthday festivities. And she also wanted to see the furniture. She thought she might find something she liked. [*He wraps the pipe up in a handkerchief, and puts it away.*]

Bast. Juliane, of the Alhambra and the Tivoli! She used to be the perpetual spinster! [*He laughs.*]

Blumenschøn. She's not so old after all. You must be mistaking her for someone else. She really is a—not that I know her. I scarcely ever go to the Gihles' house.

Bast. No, I'm not making any mistake. What does Gihle do?

Blumenschøn. Gihle? What he always did: nothing. He's being seventy to-day, that's what he's doing. He sold the mills long ago. The only things that interest him now are games like chess and dominoes.

Bast. What?

Blumenschøn. It can't be very amusing for his wife. After all, she used to sing all over the world. Didn't she go to South America?

Bast. I don't know.

Blumenschøn. Anyhow, she was away from here for some years. Not that I know anything about it.

Bast. And does she play chess?

Blumenschøn. No. Not at all. That's why she feels so bored at home. She has always been accustomed to be in

the forefront of everything, and she won't give it up. To-day she said she'd taken up Socialism.

Bast. She must be here. The man said she was.

Blumenschøn. Yes. She was. For a few minutes. She went out to speak to the maid, I think.

Bast. Ask her to come in. I should like to see her. Is she still a beautiful woman?

Blumenschøn. What's the matter with you, Bast? You seem to think all the women are beautiful now.

Bast. Yes. After a long journey I think one does. [*He takes off his coat.*]

Blumenschøn. But Mrs. Gihle is not the kind of person one can—well—— You are making a mistake. She's a woman of position.

Bast. What is your maid's name?

Blumenschøn. The maid?

Bast. [*Opening the kitchen door and calling.*] Annie! Petra! Frederica! [*The maid comes to the door and waits, puzzled.*] Ask Mrs. Gihle to come in, will you?

Blumenschøn. No.

Bast. [*Taking off his hat and speaking through the doorway to Mrs. Gihle.*] Don't let me drive you away. My friend here thinks me a little informal. But I asked him why I mightn't see a beautiful woman for once in my life, although I do come from a wild country. [*Mrs. Gihle comes in.*] My name is Per Bast, yours I know. I heard you came here to see the furniture. You may have it all as far as I am concerned. But unfortunately you forestalled me with regard to the Turkish pipe.

Blumenschøn. She hasn't seen it.

Bast. Let me show it to you. It's studded with precious stones.

Mrs. Gihle. What wild country do you come from?

Bast. Just now from my home in the north. I'm only passing through here, and stopped to pick up our friend Alexander. But I really come from the prairies far away in the Argentine. You don't know that country, I suppose?

Mrs. Gihle. No. But I know most countries.

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle was a singer, an artist.

Bast. And still is. I can hear it in your voice. Won't you sit down?

Mrs. Gihle. For a minute. [*She takes off her cloak.*] You really have a very nice kitchen out there. And now you're going to leave it.

Blumenschøn. Yes.

Mrs. Gihle. My husband will miss you. As a matter of fact he's missing you now.

Blumenschøn. [*To Bast.*] There is a party at Gihle's house to-day. It's his birthday. Mrs. Gihle was so kind as to invite me on this happy occasion. But I was expecting you.

Bast. What did that matter? I should have accepted that invitation whomever I might have been expecting. [*He bows.*] Many happy returns of the day.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Taking off her silk shawl.*] I wonder if you would care to pay us a visit? I know you come from the great world, so I must warn you that we're only plain people.

Bast. It is very kind of you indeed. But I'm travelling, and am scarcely able to accept.

Mrs. Gihle. Why not?

Bast. I've grown very unaccustomed to such things. For eight years I've practically lived in the open.

Mrs. Gihle. Then we'll stay in the open—in the garden. Will you come now?

Blumenschøn. That would be too cold for the birthday hero.

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't think that. He can put up with what we can. Besides, there's a pavilion in the garden. It's quite cosy there.

Bast. You see, Alexander, Mrs. Gihle will even go to that length to get us to come.

Blumenschøn. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] He's full of jokes of all kinds. [*To Bast.*] Of course it all depends on you.

Bast. I shall be delighted to accept. Many thanks.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Starting to put on her cloak.*] Don't thank me. Instead of that, perhaps you would play a game of some kind with my husband.

Bast. [*Laughing.*] Yes. I'll do that for you, Alexander.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Laughing.*] No. You misunderstand me. My husband is very fond of board games, and as it's his birthday to-day——

Bast. I'll play him a game of chess.

Mrs. Gihle. That would be very nice. [*They help her on with her cloak.*] You must both come at once.

Bast. I must just go to my hotel to change. I may be a few minutes, because I've a lot of things with me and they're sure to have got mixed up with my clothes.

Blumenschøn. Per Bast has brought some specimens for

the Museum. Spears, axes, pottery, and things of that kind, I understand.

Bast. Yes. A number of things. Even a live snake.

Mrs. Gihle. Ugh! Really. I hope it's not poisonous.

Bast. Very poisonous. It's a cobra.

Blumenschøn. Who did you bring it for?

Bast. Professor Collett, I think.

Mrs. Gihle. I hope that snake's not amongst your clothes?

Bast. I shouldn't wonder. Because I have a boy who——

Mrs. Gihle. A boy?

Bast. Yes. A Negro boy. He has a way of tidying things so that they're never found again.

Mrs. Gihle. You really have a Negro with you?

Blumenschøn. I suppose he's not for Professor Collett too?

Bast. The boy? If he likes to take him, yes.

Mrs. Gihle. You'd better give him to me. I might find some use for him.

Bast. [*Laughing.*] Why, certainly. I know I'd be very glad to be rid of him. He's a bright boy. He learnt Norwegian from the girls at home in a few weeks.

Mrs. Gihle. Well I shall hope to see both of you soon. [*Bast follows Mrs. Gihle out by the door at the back. Blumenschøn goes furtively to have a look at the Nargileh and then puts it back where it was.*]

Bast. [*Coming back and putting on his hat.*] We shall have to hurry and change into something suitable. So that was Juliane!

Blumenschøn. If you're disappointed, that's because you didn't see her alone. She's a fine woman. At least, that's what I've heard.

Bast. And once she lived amongst masses of flowers! That's what the world's like. Once she supped with princes, while now she's glad enough to meet people in antique shops! Isn't it so, Alexander?

Blumenschøn. But you don't know her?

Bast. There's still Indian summer warmth in her blood. I could see that. [*Softly.*] I felt it. As she sat there, one of her hands caressed the other.

Blumenschøn. [*Laughing.*] You're absurd now, Bast.

Bast. I've been travelling. [*Three short rings are heard.*]

Blumenschøn. Three rings. That's my fiancée. It was lucky she didn't come just now.

Bast. Is she jealous?

Blumenschøn. No. But you know what womenfolk are.

Bast. Aren't you going to open the door?

Blumenschøn. The maid will do that. Don't forget, when she comes, we've very little time. We've got to change. [*Fanny Norman enters. She stops, surprised.*]

Bast. [*With an exclamation.*] Blonde! I've never seen anything like it.

Blumenschøn. [*Introducing.*] This is Fanny Norman. Fanny, this is my old friend, Per Bast.

Bast. Your hand. Pardon my manners. But I've been travelling for months and you're so blonde and young.

Blumenschøn. [*Laughs indulgently.*] He's fond of a joke, is Per.

Bast. A joke? Oh, no.

Fanny. [*Smiling.*] It was the hat, I think.

Bast. [*Sweeping it off.*] Did I forget it? You must excuse me. Won't you sit down?

Fanny. Shall I? Am I interrupting you? [*She sits down.*] I saw a car outside.

Bast. It's mine.

Fanny. And I noticed a carriage coming from here just now.

Blumenschøn. A carriage?

Bast. That was Mrs. Gihle's.

Fanny. Has she been here again?

Blumenschøn. Just for a moment. Bast was here at the time.

Bast. I really oughtn't to have mentioned it.

Fanny. [*Laughing.*] Oh, there's nothing wrong in that. Mrs. Gihle comes in now and again to buy things.

Blumenschøn. To-day she came in to ask both of us to the birthday party.

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] You ought to come with us.

Fanny. I? Oh, no. Mrs. Gihle never asks me.

Blumenchøn. It's her husband's birthday to-day so only men will be asked.

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] I expect you're not twenty yet. Not nearly.

Fanny. [*Looking at him for a short time and smiling.*] Yes. You are amusing.

Blumenschøn. Oh, I was going to ask you—do you know what time it is, Bast?

Bast. [*Fumbling for his watch.*] Don't you know the time? You've so many clocks.

Fanny. The clocks here don't go.

Blumenschøn. Don't go? Don't they! They certainly do. But they're fine old pieces. You wouldn't appreciate that; and I can't afford to let them go every day. But there's no reason why they shouldn't. [*He starts the only clock which is fit for use.*] Now you can see for yourself! And they strike too. I can't start the others now because I've got to change.

Bast. Alexander, why should we go at all? We might just as well stay here.

Blumenschøn. Nonsense.

Bast. I think I'd rather.

Blumenschøn. So would I, but we can't.

Fanny. What kind of work will you give Alexander in the Argentine?

Bast. We shall have to see. Our company does surveying as well as railway work. Besides that, we've bought land and own large ranches and estates.

Fanny. Is the work hard?

Bast. Oh! It keeps us busy. But it's not so hard on the stock farms. Looking after a few thousand creatures.

Fanny. Slaves?

Bast. No. Not that kind of beast. Cows. We ride from ranch to ranch. We're always in the saddle.

Fanny. That will be just the thing for you, Alexander. Do you hear that? You're to ride.

Blumenschøn. Yes. I hear. You're always making some remarks about my foot. [*Sharply.*] There's nothing the matter with me, I should like you to remember. It's only my leg.

Fanny. Of course, Alexander. I didn't mean that.

Blumenschøn. I'm quite aware I shan't be able to ride so well as Lieutenant Lynum. You'll have to forgive me that.

Bast. Who is Lieutenant Lynum?

Blumenschøn. An acquaintance. A cavalry officer. A very good friend of Fanny's.

Fanny. Well, Alexander, I think he's more your friend than mine.

Blumenschøn. Yes. He seems to favour me to a certain extent. I like him well enough. And as you blushed, Fanny, I may as well tell you that you're not the least bit in love with him.

Fanny. My dear Alexander, I'm not in love with married men.

Blumenschøn. The worst thing about Lynum is not that he's married, but that, as far as I can judge, he's such a home product.

Bast. Is it so much better to be an immigrant?

Fanny. That's what Alexander believes!

Blumenschøn. And I've every reason to. I'm no immigrant, I know, but my grandfather was. He was the founder of our name and reputation in this country.

Bast. What name and what reputation? And which family are you thinking of?

Blumenschøn. You'll excuse my saying so, but I hear you've been in the Argentine for a long time.

Bast. [*Smiling complacently.*] And I hear that you'll have to go out there.

Blumenschøn. You never told me what time it was, Bast.

Bast. [*Smiles and takes out his watch.*] Have all your clocks stopped again?

Fanny. You see; none of them *do* go!

Blumenschøn. Don't go? It's you who don't go! Although I ought to be changing. We've no time for this, Bast. We *must* go, as we accepted the invitation. That's the custom.

Fanny. [*Getting up.*] What I came for was to ask you both to come in and see us this evening. But I suppose you can't.

Bast. I wish we could. I'd much rather.

Fanny. [*Smiling.*] Would you?

Bast. Yes. A thousand times. And if you invite us again——

Blumenschøn. [*To Bast.*] You know quite well it's impossible.

Fanny. Of course it is. You must come to us to-morrow. Good-bye. Good-bye, Alexander.

Blumenschøn. Good-bye, my dear. You must excuse our driving you away.

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] Where are you going?

Fanny. I? Home.

Bast. Then I'll take you in my car. I'm going home too. [*He puts on his hat and coat.*]

Blumenschøn. What are you doing this for?

Bast. [*Looking at him in a puzzled way; to Fanny.*] Tell me, is he jealous?

Blumenschøn. Of course I am. But you haven't time, Bast.

Bast. Come along. It won't take more than a few minutes in the car.

Fanny. I've a good mind to.

Blumenschøn. Well, then, go along. But I think it's a little unnecessary.

Bast. He's sure to think that. (*Bast and Fanny Norman go out.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Shouting after her.*] Fanny!

[*The hall door is heard shutting. Blumenschøn stops and looks towards the door of the room; then he turns round, takes out the Nargileh, uncovers it, puts it on the table and looks at it. He opens the kitchen door.*]

Irene! When the man comes to take these things away—the man who was here to-day—let him have everything. Yes, everything. Not, of course, my trunk in there, or that thing [*he points to the Nargileh*] because I'm taking that with me.

Irene. I see, sir. [*She is about to rub the Nargileh with her apron.*]

Blumenschøn. No. Don't do that. I'm taking it to a jeweller, and he'll clean it for me. But, you understand, the man's to take everything. [*He goes off to the left.*]

Irene. Yes, sir. [*She goes out through the kitchen door.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Coming back hurriedly; he has taken*

off his coat and is carrying it; he opens the kitchen door.] Irene! I don't want you to tell him that I took anything with me. This thing isn't mine: I've got to give it to the jeweller. [*He hesitates.*] But you shouldn't tell him that either. Why have I got to explain everything! Don't speak to the man at all, you understand.

Irene. Yes, sir.

Blumenschøn. And, Irene, don't forget what I've told you. [*He goes out through the door on the left.*]

CURTAIN

Act II.

Act II.

[*Gihle's garden. It is lit up with Chinese lanterns. On the right is the façade of a large house consisting of two floors and having a verandah with columns. The door leading into the house is open. Further back on the same side is an open pavilion with pillars in front of it. There is a fence on the left with a wrought-iron gate leading into the drive. Outside, the street can be seen. On the left is a table, and further back, in front of the pavilion, there is another table. Both have seats in front of them. In the centre, at the back, is a fountain, before which stand a table and a seat. At the back and on either side are small lawns, flower-beds, trees and bushes. On the first table on the left are bottles and glasses, coffee-cups, cigars and flowers. Lieutenant Lynum is sitting by this table in uniform. His cloak is lying on the seat. Mrs. Gihle is with him; she is wearing another dress and a number of rings. A maid stands near her; she has an empty tray in her hand and is waiting for orders.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Dismissing the maid.*] I don't want anything else, thank you. [*The maid goes out.*] All the lights are lit now and everything's ready, Lieutenant Lynum,

so they can come when they like. [*Goes towards the gate and looks through it.*]

Lynum. [*Following her.*] I'm glad they're coming. For in any case you wouldn't be content with me. But now you'll be happy. There he is!

Blumenschøn. [*Comes through the gate, wearing a light overcoat.*] I'm sorry to be so late.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Advancing towards him and offering him her hand.*] I'm so glad to see you. You're the first.

Lynum. Pardon me, I was the first. Good evening, Blumenschøn.

Blumenschøn. Hasn't Per Bast arrived yet?

Mrs. Gihle. No.

Blumenschøn. I can't understand it. He's got a car. And I had time to change and do an errand in the town. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Oh! I'm expecting a messenger. I told him to look for me in the garden.

Mrs. Gihle. I see.

Blumenschøn. You must excuse his coming in. But it's important.

Lynum. [*Indicating the table on which stand glasses and bottles.*] I expect we shall be here.

Blumenschøn. Won't you show us the way? [*Lynum goes to the table.*] [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Wherever can Bast be?

Mrs. Gihle. I suppose he couldn't get his clothes. On account of the snakes! [*She laughs.*]

Blumenschøn. He drove away with my fiancée.

Mrs. Gihle. When did she arrive?

Blumenschøn. A moment after you'd gone. And Bast drove her home in his car.

Mrs. Gihle. Well, then I expect he's with her still.

Blumenschøn. Nonsense! But I must say I thoroughly dislike Bast.

Mrs. Gihle. You say he drove your fiancée home?

Blumenschøn. That's nothing to do with it. He was going the same way anyhow. Still, I don't like the man at all. He has no manners. He called you in from the kitchen, and went on in my house just as if he owned the place. He got to know Fanny in the same kind of way.

Mrs. Gihle. Who is this Fanny? You can't expect me to know who Fanny is.

Blumenschøn. You're too acute. You know quite well she's my fiancée.

Mrs. Gihle. I don't care for my own sex. And I don't like your knowing so much about them. Why didn't you insist on her going home at once? It was bedtime for children.

Blumenschøn. It was all due to Bast's bad manners. I wouldn't tolerate him at all if it weren't for the post he's offering me. But if he goes too far I'll get Lynum to give him a good thrashing.

Mrs. Gihle. That mightn't be so easy for Lynum.

Blumenschøn Lynum? [*Smiling.*] I'll risk him. I owe that much to Fanny. Besides, Bast has no reason to depend too much on me. I'm expecting a message soon.

Mrs. Gihle. Is that going to make you independent of him?

Blumenschøn. No. I don't say that. But it's an important message.

Mrs. Gihle. Who from?

Blumenschøn. I shan't tell you. Except that it's from a jeweller.

Mrs. Gihle. A jeweller?

Blumenschøn. You remember I was looking for something at my house? Well, perhaps I found it.

Mrs. Gihle. And now it's being examined by an expert? [*Passing it over.*] But you talk so much nonsense.

Lynum. [*Calling.*] Can't you even limp over here, Blumenschøn?

Blumenschøn. [*Pointing towards Lynum.*] Is he the worse for drink already?

Mrs. Gihle. Oh. As usual. [*A car drives up and stops at the gate. Bast gets out of it, carrying a huge bouquet.*]

Blumenschøn. Here he comes at last. Then I'll join Lynum. [*He goes over to him.*]

Bast. [*Greeting Mrs. Gihle from a distance.*] Here I am. And delighted to be your guest.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Going to him.*] Well, I asked you. And I'm very glad you've come.

Bast. I couldn't get Fanny Norman to come with me. I couldn't bring her to do it.

Mrs. Gihle. Couldn't you? She might have come in such agreeable company? I hear you have been driving her about.

Bast. Yes. And it was a little further than I thought. In fact it took rather long. And the worst of it was it left me no time to dress. You see, I haven't changed.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Smiling.*] Couldn't you find your things?

Bast. No. At least, I haven't really looked for them. I hope you'll excuse me. The only thing I did find time to do was to stop at a florists's and get these. [*He hands her the flowers.*] Where's your husband?

Mrs. Gihle. This is very kind of you. Are they all for me?

Bast. Certainly. But I must admit I never could understand such things. I don't know whether you or your husband ought really to have them. In fact I discussed it with the chauffeur.

Mrs. Gihle. Perhaps we can share them between us. There are certainly enough for both of us.

Bast. It's very quiet and charming here. Not a soul outside. Where *is* your husband?

Mrs. Gihle. He's in his room, talking to a relative. He was very interested when he heard you might be coming. He was too excited to sleep after lunch to-day.

Bast. To tell you the truth, I can't play chess at all. I only said so in order to get here.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking round and speaking in a different tone of voice.*] Thank you for coming. I owe you an apology: I telephoned to your hotel about noon.

Bast. Then I have to thank you for that.

Mrs. Gihle. I heard you'd arrived. And I thought it would be nice to see you again.

Bast. But after such an interval it can't be so very nice. I'm many years older now.

Mrs. Gihle. Who isn't?

Bast. I didn't know it was you who had telephoned till I met our mutual friend Alexander. But a certain Mrs. Gihle had left a kind message.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. That was me.

Lynum. [*Bringing a tray on which are bottles and glasses, and putting it on the table in front of the fountain.*] If Mohammed won't come to the mountain——

Mrs. Gihle. [*Introducing.*] Lieutenant Lynum, Per Bast. [*To Bast.*] He's been so useful. He's lit all these lanterns for me.

Blumenschøn. That was my duty in former times.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. Until you refused to do it any more. [*To Bast.*] Excuse me. [*To Lynum.*] What have you got in those bottles?

Lynum. Grapes.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Investigating.*] Whisky. Tokay. Perhaps you'd prefer something else?

Bast. Prefer something else to the best? No, thank you. [*He pours out a whisky.*]

Lynum. That's the kind of answer I like. Your good health—now what's your name? Bust?

Bast. [*Smiling.*] You're a military wit. [*Clinking glasses and drinking.*] Mayn't I drink to the hero of the day?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I'll tell my husband and take him the flowers.

Blumenschøn. I hope you won't make him come out earlier than necessary.

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't say that. And it certainly

isn't too warm here. Still, we can stay here for the moment, and go in later.

Blumenschøn. Oh! I couldn't do that. I told the messenger I'd be in the garden.

Bast. I couldn't either. Because I haven't had time to change.

Blumenschøn. Couldn't you find your things?

Bast. I never got a chance to look for them.

Blumenschøn. Oh! Why not? Where were you then?

Bast. Where was I? I called on her parents of course. For a few minutes. The Normans are delightful people. And of course I wanted to meet your future parents-in-law.

Blumenschøn. So you never went to the Hotel?

Bast. No. [*At this moment Gihle, an elderly, clean-shaven man, wearing a rose in his buttonhole, opens a window on the first floor and calls in a low voice.*]

Gihle. Juliane!

Lynum. Your husband's calling you.

Mrs. Gihle. I'm coming. [*She goes into the house.*]

Lynum. The more I think of what you said just now, the more I realize that you were being facetious at my expense. You said I was a military wit.

Bast. [*Smiling.*] Did I?

Lynum. I admit I called you Bust on the spur of the moment. That was a mistake on my part, because, although I make a point of not addressing adventurers or ranchers at all, if I can help it—on principle—yet if I do, I try to use their right names. And I did try just now.

Bast. You got very near it.

Lynum. I'm glad you think so. I had the impression that it was quite near enough for a man like you.

Bast. [*To Blumenschøn.*] Is Lynum a dangerous sort of person?

Blumenschøn. What am I to say? He doesn't seem quite harmless.

Bast. Oh! Well, in that case I'll drink with you, Lynum. I'm a little frightened for my own skin. [*They drink.*]

Lynum. Then there's another matter. It has got about that you took another man's fiancée out in a car. You probably don't know it, but such things have to be answered for—amongst white men.

Bast. [*Taken aback for a moment.*] What? Well, yes. I did take her out. She told me about you.

Lynum. About me? That's no excuse for you.

Bast. Alexander, the man seems to speak fairly sensibly. Can he shoot straight?

Lynum. Pretty straight, Bast. So if you will arrange time and place——

Bast. [*Smiling.*] No. I'm not sure I will. I don't think I shall have time myself. But I can get my Negro boy to give you a thrashing.

Lynum. Your Negro boy?

Bast. Yes. He wouldn't disappoint you. He's got a talent for assault and battery. You'd be pleased with him. He'll get you on your back, or on your side——

Blumenschøn. Now, listen. This is getting serious.

Lynum. Serious? [*To Bast.*] He says, serious. But—what's your name again?

Bast. Bast.

Lynum. Well, Bast, although you may be able to read and write, you seem to know very little about what's done amongst white men. If you were to feel a heavy boot in your back, I dare say you'd understand that well enough; but amongst us it would be quite an unheard-of-thing. If you understand that much, you'd understand what I'm going to ask you now.

Bast. I'm waiting to hear it.

Lynum. I'm going to ask you to find time to settle matters with me. I should consider it a favour.

Bast. [*Thoughtfully.*] Well, on conditions.

Lynum. Any you like.

Bast. Then we're agreed.

Lynum. Are we? I know a civilized man's word is his bond; but in a case like this——

Blumenschøn. This has gone far enough. I think you'd better drink together and make an end of it. Your healths! Both of you. [*They all drink together. Gihle now comes out of the house in an overcoat. He is followed by Mrs. Gihle and Teodor, a man of Gihle's age. They exchange greetings.*]

Gihle. [*To Blumenschøn.*] I'm glad to see you, but aren't you late? Late on my birthday! The young are not very attentive to their elders nowadays.

Mrs. Gihle. Blumenschøn is leaving for South America day after to-morrow, so he's rather busy.

Gihle. Of course. You must excuse my forgetting it. And what I said about young people isn't true either. Lieutenant Lynum has been with us all day. [*He looks round.*] It looks quite gay here with all those lights. I hope you haven't been walking on the grass.

Mrs. Gihle. No. We've both been very careful.

Gihle. [*Jokingly.*] I'm glad to hear it. You can't be too careful with cavalrymen. [*There is general laughter.*] And I must warn you against Lieutenants, Juliane! Is this the stranger? [*He gives his hand to Bast.*] I'm very glad to see you.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. That is Per Bast.

Bast. Many happy returns of the day.

Gihle. A thousand thanks for the flowers. It was a delicate tribute from a younger to an older man. I don't remember anything of the kind before. And on this day of this month I have a birthday every year! But my cousin Teodor here [*he points to Teodor*] doesn't believe it. Cousin Teodor maintains that it depends on Easter whether my birthday falls early or late. In fact we were discussing it just now.

Mrs. Gihle. Are you sure none of you feel the cold?

Gihle. Cold? I think Lynum looks as if he did.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. But I'm sure you don't.

Gihle. [*Laughing.*] I've a good circulation, thank Heaven! Well, Bast, now you see how we live. My wife and I pass our time unpretentiously here in the house. You wouldn't like it, coming as you do from the wide world, but we're quite content.

Bast. I think it's charming here.

Mrs. Gihle. He just said the same thing to me. I think it charming here too; and, after all, I've been out in the wide world as well.

Gihle. Yes. That's what she always says. I'm very fortunate in having such a wife; you must get to know her better. I was an old bachelor, but she married me, and settled down with me, though she might have married a thousand times at one place or another. [*Looking at what is on the table.*] What have we got here?

Lynum. Grapes.

Mrs. Gihle. Perhaps you'd prefer something else?

Gihle. Oh, no. What our guests propose to drink is good enough for me. [*He raises his glass.*] Perhaps I may welcome you all. And thank you for your kindness and good wishes. [*To Bast.*] A special welcome to the stranger who comes from so far. [*They all drink.*]

Bast. [*Lifting his glass.*] This stranger has been admitted by a kind impulse on the part of our hostess. And as it's our host's birthday we certainly will drink to his health! [*They all drink and bow to Gihle. Teodor sees what they are doing and hastens to bow too.*]

Gihle. [*Nodding to them.*] I am very touched. Still, it is my birthday, and I must accept it. Remember, Juliane, it must be like this every year. Lynum, please don't walk on the grass.

Lynum. Oh! I'm so sorry. [*Lynum and Blumenschøn go towards the first table on the left.*]

Gihle. You're wild, Lynum, wild. [*To Bast.*] Do you plant flowers and shrubs like these round the house in your part of the world?

Bast. No. The climate in the Argentine is very different from this, and we grow other things.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Gihle.*] I remember your saying *you'*d do something of the sort.

Gihle. What did I say?

Mrs. Gihle. That you'd get some other kinds of trees. I think you mentioned acacias.

Gihle. Did I? [*To Bast.*] You see, I've seriously thought of planting acacias here, instead of what we have. But I've only thought about it: I haven't done anything. I'm a very conservative person. [*Suddenly.*] My grandfather was too; he was offered ten thousuand gold dollars for this place, but he wouldn't sell.

Bast. He was quite right.

Gihle. Yes, wasn't he? And my father was offered thirty thousand, in the days when the suburbs of the town began to reach here. But he wouldn't sell either.

Bast. I'm glad to hear it.

Gihle. And when I inherited the property and came of age and reached years of discretion, I was offered forty thousand for it. But I had no use for the money at the time, so *I* wouldn't sell.

Bast. Anyone else would have jumped at it.

Gihle. Yes. But I'm a conservative man. I stick to old ways. [*In a louder voice.*] To-day, as you see, this place is in the middle of the town. What do you think it's worth now?

Bast. It couldn't be bought by anybody.

Gihle. You're right. [*He is tired of talking.*] So my

wife and I can keep it and live here. Did we drink your health, Juliane?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, you did. Now where are the chess-players going to sit? [*She joins Lynum and Blumenschøn.*]

Gihle. Because it's my birthday she won't let us drink her health. It's just like her: everything must be done for me. [*To Bast.*] I've been very much hoping to get you to play a game of chess with me.

Bast. You won't take long to play a game with me. I only promised Mrs. Gihle to play with you so that she should be free to see her young friends.

Gihle. Really?

Bast. Youth turns to youth, you know.

Gihle. Yes. That's quite true. Youth wants to get up to some mischief. But I prefer a serious discussion or an honest game. That's more in accord with my years. Teodor, here, has similar tastes to mine. We've argued together for many an hour, you can believe me.

Bast. Have you?

Gihle. Yes. He disputes very keenly. I can't discuss anything much with my wife because she's too young. Besides, she's a lady. But she has a heart.

Bast. Yes. I'm convinced of that.

Gihle. A very kind heart. The first thing she did this morning was to give away a sum of money—a large sum for our circumstances.

Bast. Wasn't it just as much your gift as hers?

Gihle. No. I must put you right there. I'd never have dreamed of it. I must say it's not at all to my taste

to give money away to unions and funds to encourage Socialism. It's just like throwing it into the sea.

Bast. I suppose it was in honour of your birthday.

Gihle. Oh, yes. And it shows what a kind heart she has. [*Speaking to his wife.*] Where did you say we should sit, Juliane?

Mrs. Gihle. Would you rather be indoors or out?

Gihle. [*To Bast.*] Which would you prefer?

Bast. This is a very delightful garden to sit in.

Gihle. Exactly. I don't see why anybody should be so foolish as to want to sit indoors at this time of year.

Mrs. Gihle. But, Father, you're not well. You never slept at all this afternoon.

Bast. Didn't you?

Gihle. I didn't need it. I prefer to stay up all day on my birthday.

Mrs. Gihle. Then why not here, on the verandah? The chessmen are there already.

Gihle. [*Raising his glass.*] A decision honourable to both of us, Bast. [*All the men are drinking, including Teodor.*]

Gihle. Now, Juliane, I want no one to disturb us. No one.

Mrs. Gihle. Very well. We'll all go away. Into the garden. [*She goes to the back.*]

Bast. You ought to thank us for staying here.

[*Mrs. Gihle, Lynum and Blumenschøn disappear into the garden. Gihle, Bast and Teodor are left sitting on the verandah. Each has his glass before him.*]

Gihle. Teodor is very fond of looking on, but he doesn't

play. He finds it very interesting to watch. He's got a good head, a very good head, but curiously enough he *can't* learn chess.

Bast. Perhaps he has other qualities.

Gihle. Oh, yes. He can argue. Teodor and I have had many a hot discussion. Are you comfortable?

Bast. Thank you. I think somebody wants to speak to you. [*Some men are seen coming through the gate. They are carrying instruments. The oldest of them, Fredriksen, a grey-haired man in a buttoned coat, with a large hat, comes towards the verandah and waits respectfully. He then bows repeatedly.*]

Gihle. What? What does all this mean?

Fredriksen. Good evening.

Gihle. [*Rising.*] What? Who are you?

Fredriksen. Fredriksen.

Gihle. Fredriksen?

Fredriksen. That is my name.

Gihle. Yes. But what do you want?

Fredriksen. I and a few comrades have brought our instruments. I hope you'll think it an honour and a pleasure for us to play to you, and that's what we think too.

Gihle. [*Frowning.*] What's all this? Where do you come from?

Fredriksen. From the Confederation. In the name of the Confederation.

Gihle. I suppose you are socialists?

Fredriksen. Some of us are. Perhaps we all are.

Gihle. Exactly. And what do you want here? [*To Bast.*] He's using very grandiose language. "Confeder-

ation" was what he called it. [*To Fredriksen.*] I expect the "Confederation" has a Fund?

Fredriksen. Oh, yes.

Gihle. Exactly. So I understand. But this morning my wife—— Do you know who I am?

Fredriksen. Yes. Very well.

Gihle. He says he knows who I am! Did you ever hear anything like it? [*He turns to Fredriksen.*] Young man, you must come into the garden and talk to me. I've many years on my back. And to-day's my seventieth birthday.

Fredriksen. I know. And I have the honour of congratulating you!

Mrs. Gihle. [*Hurrying towards them.*] Is that you, Fredriksen?

Gihle. What in the world does he want to come here for? This young man's talking very strangely to me—to me!

Fredriksen. [*Looking at her and bowing.*] We are a deputation. We've been sent to thank you for your very generous donation to our Sick Fund.

Mrs. Gihle. Don't you understand, Father?

Fredriksen. [*Explaining to Mrs. Gihle.*] We come in the name of the Confederation, as we know it's his birthday. My comrades are waiting by the gate. We've brought our instruments and we'd be only too glad to play. But it seems we've given offence.

Mrs. Gihle. I suppose you've been talking, Fredriksen. I know you. [*To Gihle.*] Listen, Father, they're musicians,

and they came to ask you if they might play in your honour.

Gihle. What?

Mrs. Gihle. They want to show their gratitude for the subscription they received this morning. And greet you on your birthday in this way.

Gihle. It's quite impossible. [*He comes down from the verandah. Teodor follows and looks from one person to the other as they speak.*]

Mrs. Gihle. This is extremely kind of you, Fredriksen. Call your friends. [*Calling to them.*] Won't you come in?

Gihle. I must say this overwhelms me. [*Shaking hands with Fredriksen*]. I misunderstood your kindness. Is there no wine there, Juliane?

Mrs. Gihle. I'll have some brought. I don't know what they'd like. You, Fredriksen, will probably prefer champagne.

Fredriksen. There's nothing else quite so good. I see you still remember what my tastes were in days gone by.

Mrs. Gihle. Fredriksen is a great musician, Father. He has accompanied me at concerts before now. I'll see that—— [*She goes to the verandah and rings. Gihle crosses over to the musicians, shakes hands with them, and says a few words to each one. Mrs. Gihle returns; speaking to Bast.*] Wouldn't you rather have come with us into the garden?

Bast. Yes, I should. But if I had, Alexander couldn't have gone with you.

Mrs. Gihle. [*After giving some instructions to a maid.*]

Were you really jealous? That was just what I wanted.

Bast. You mustn't say that. I might misunderstand you.

Mrs. Gihle. Misunderstand me?

Bast. Yes. And think you cared for me!

Mrs. Gihle. Oh! You know I've always cared for you. You don't mean to say you've forgotten Buenos Aires?

Bast. I remember you left me there.

Mrs. Gihle. I was forced to by a contract. I never *have* broken with anyone. It's always the other people who break with me. It's my fate. Isn't it strange?

Bast. It sounds incredible.

Mrs. Gihle. But that's what happens, all the same. Are you leaving here the day after to-morrow?

Bast. Yes.

Mrs. Gihle. I wish you weren't going.

Bast. Why don't you come with us?

Mrs. Gihle. I'm not quite so foolish. I never will be. I suppose you'll have to go.

Bast. But he'll stay with you.

Gihle. [*Approaching them.*] Juliane, Fredriksen is quite an elderly man. He has a wife and a grown-up family.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I know he's got a grown-up daughter. [*To Bast.*] Can't you stay in this country, Bast?

Bast. Blumenschøn can't.

Mrs. Gihle. Blumenschøn will be anxious about his fiancée while he's abroad.

Bast. [*Interested.*] Anxious. Why?

Mrs. Gihle. How interested you are! That's what men are like. And once you were interested in me.

Bast. Yes. And you in me.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. And I in you.

Bast. Why should Alexander be so anxious about his fiancée? Who is the danger?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't know.

Bast. Her dear friend Lieutenant Lynum?

Mrs. Gihle. How do you know about that?

Bast. How do I know about what? [*Two maids bring out champagne, also fruit and cakes. Mrs. Gihle leaves the verandah and indicates the table by the fountain.*]

Gihle. Fredriksen isn't exactly young. All the same, he's not my age.

Mrs. Gihle. Not quite.

Gihle. He's some way to go before he'll be seventy. As I am to-day. [*To the musicians.*] Drink with me. Please help yourselves. [*The maids go into the house by way of the verandah. Bast looks them up and down as they pass him, and then joins the others. Lynum and Blumenschøn come in from the garden.*]

Bast. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] I like your maids. They're so young and pretty.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. Very young. [*They all drink. To Lynum and Blumenschøn.*] These are some musicians. They're going to play in my husband's honour.

Fredriksen. I'm afraid we haven't much time. We're engaged at the Bristol.

Gihle. At the Bristol?

Fredriksen. Yes. In the café. We play there every night. There's an interval now and we took advantage of that to come over here.

Gihle. It was very kind of you. Don't walk on the grass, Lynum.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fredriksen.*] So you haven't much time?

Fredriksen. You understand me at once. No one ever understands me so well. So if the ladies and gentlemen will go on to the verandah——

Mrs. Gihle. Very well! [*She takes Gihle by the arm.*] You must stand in front.

Gihle. I will. After all, it *is* my birthday.

[*They all go on to the verandah. Gihle is in front, without his hat. The musicians start to play. The music causes people to stop in the street on the other side of the railings.*]

Gihle. [*Who has become rather hot with bowing and returning salutations.*] It's wonderful—wonderful!

Mrs. Gihle. People are stopping in the street.

Bast. The public? That's nothing new for you.

Mrs. Gihle. No, indeed. I had full houses wherever I went. Just rows and rows of heads. In the summer I often sang outside in the gardens—in places like this.

Gihle. But to-day, Juliane, it's I who am before the public.

Mrs. Gihle. I'm afraid so, Father. It's only you now. [*There is more music. Gihle has to bow again.*] Have you got to go now, Fredriksen?

Gihle. [*In a low voice.*] Such a thing has never happened to me before. I'm overwhelmed. I can't find words to express myself. I have to thank you a thousand times, gentlemen, for this extraordinary proof of your—— I hope you will convey my very good wishes to your Confederation! [*He comes down from the verandah.*] I hope you'll all drink one more glass. [*The others come down after him.*]

Mrs. Gihle. They haven't time for that, Father. Fredriksen, you'd better take some bottles with you. [*She gives him some.*]

Fredriksen. You understand me wonderfully.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I know if you're late you'll be fined. It always used to be so in my day. A thousand thanks to all of you. [*She goes towards the gate with Fredriksen. Gihle follows her and Teodor follows him.*]

Bast. [*Running and calling after them.*] You'd better take my car.

Mrs. Gihle. Splendid. The car.

Bast. [*To the chauffeur.*] Drive these gentlemen to the Bristol and then come back here.

Fredriksen. [*Turning.*] Friends! Three cheers for the Gihles.

[*The musicians cheer, and the crowd in the street joins them. The car is soon filled, and the crowd jocularly offer to start it by pushing behind. Blumenschøn saunters towards the pavilion.*]

Lynum. [*To Bast.*] Excuse me. When are we going to settle that little matter?

Bast. You and your little matter!

Lynum. I see you don't understand such language. Very well. When are we going to fight?

Bast. You're nervous? You don't want to have it hanging over your head.

Lynum. Just answer me, please, will you?

Bast. We can do nothing here. Later on it might be another matter. Suppose we make the world safe for you for another hour?

Lynum. If I could only rely on your meeting me in an hour.

Bast. You can. I shall be interested to meet you. Especially as I have reason to believe that you go about sighing for someone else's fiancée. [*Gihle, Mrs. Gihle and Teodor return. Lynum and Bast stroll over to the pavilion.*]

Gihle. [*Moving his head and showing signs of still being overwhelmed.*] A great day! Without a parallel. It wasn't throwing money into the sea after all, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. So you're finding that out at last?

Gihle. Yes. I quite see it. It has been a significant day. Such things have never happened to me before. Flowers and music. Juliane, do these people, these musicians, have a paper?

Mrs. Gihle. A newspaper?

Gihle. Yes. A newspaper. I must see it. I don't mind what you think: I'll read it. Tell the maids: one of them might take it in from now.

Mrs. Gihle. But, Father, can't you do that yourself?

Gihle. I? No. I'm very conservative. Ring for the maids, won't you?

Mrs. Gihle. It's no use being in such a hurry.

Gihle. Must I get them myself, on my own birthday?

Mrs. Gihle. Sh! I only meant you'd better leave it to me. There's no reason why you should bother.

Gihle. Well, Juliane, remind me later to remind you about it. I must have that paper. There might be something in it about this. It's the first time in my life that the whole of mankind has combined to do me honour. And then Bast has put his car at the disposal of my guests! But where is he?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Calling.*] Bast!

Bast. Here I am. [*He comes forward from the back on the right of the fountain.*]

Gihle. We were interrupted. Very agreeably so, however. What impression did you get, Bast, from what has just taken place?

Bast. That you are a much honoured man.

Gihle. That's quite true.

Mrs. Gihle. Perhaps you'll put off the chess to another time now.

Gihle. The chess? Oh, no. You don't understand us, Juliane. After all, it is my birthday. [*He is feeling the cold and makes sure that his overcoat is buttoned up securely.*] But I'll make this proposal to my opponent: to move over into the pavilion.

Bast. If you like.

Gihle. As you see, people flock in here to offer me congratulations, and we can't get any peace. I dare say several other deputations will come before long.

Mrs. Gihle. If you'll go into the pavilion, I expect

Cousin Teodor will carry the board over for you. [*Looks at him to see if he will.*] You must excuse me a moment. The bottles have made my fingers sticky. [*She goes into the house. Gihle and Teodor go slowly towards the pavilion on the right of the fountain. Gihle is speaking as if to Bast.*]

Gihle. This way. But please don't step on the grass. I always have to be so careful with Lynum.

Bast. [*Calling through the door into the house.*] Annie! Louisa! Nicoline! [*He listens, then goes in and closes the door. Lynum and Blumenschøn enter from the back, on the left of the fountain.*]

Blumenschøn. What's become of them both? Did they go in there?

Lynum. It looks like it.

Blumenschøn. Impossible. The door's shut.

Lynum. He'd do anything.

Blumenschøn. Yes. But she—— [*The lock of the door is heard to open or shut.*] St! Did you hear that?

Lynum. Yes. A door being unlocked.

Blumenschøn. Or locked. [*A blind is heard being pulled up.*] What was that?

Lynum. Somebody's pulled up a blind.

Blumenschøn. Or pulled it down.

Lynum. No. I saw it. It was on the first floor. [*A window is opened.*] There she is. Opening the window now.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Speaking from the window.*] What is it? What are you doing there?

Lynum. We're waiting.

Mrs. Gihle. I'm coming down.

[*Lynum and Blumenschøn walk towards the back, on the left of the fountain. Bast comes out of the door of the house followed by the maids.*]

Bast. Now stay there and let me have a look at you. [*The maids begin to giggle. Mrs. Gihle comes out of the house.*] Oh! I was only asking the maids to bring our glasses.

Mrs. Gihle. Thank you. I forgot.

Bast. I could easily have carried two, but there are three of us.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To the maids.*] Pick up those bottles and take everything over to the pavilion. [*She waits till they 'ave gone.*] You look very well now, Bast—much better han you did. Your grey hair suits you.

Bast. Don't you prefer dark hair?

Mrs. Gihle. Well, yes. I do. But your hair wasn't grey in those days—at Buenos Aires.

Bast. No. It went grey when you left me.

Mrs. Gihle. I offered to come back, but you didn't answer. You weren't serious. You didn't think you could be serious with me. You thought I wasn't worthy of it. It's true, I wasn't. And now I'm still less so—since I left my old life. What am I to do? It's unfortunate, meeting you again like this. I wish I could be as I was—is it six years ago?

Bast. But my dear Mrs. Gihle, as far as I understand——

Mrs. Gihle. [*Clasping her hands.*] Six years! What

a difference that makes! What were you going to say?

Bast. That you're well enough off now.

Mrs. Gihle. Oh, yes, I know. But it's not that. I went upstairs just now [*she points up to her window*] to put on a little rouge to make myself look younger again. It gets harder and harder.

Bast. You weren't doing it for your own benefit.

Mrs. Gihle. No. For someone else's.

Bast. And you didn't telephone to the hotel in order to see me again. It wouldn't have mattered to you whether I'd stayed here or not. You only wanted to meet me in order to stop someone else from going away.

Mrs. Gihle. It may be. But you shouldn't believe it. I don't want what I do to be put in that light. Why do I have such difficulty in giving anybody up? It may be fear of getting somebody worse. It always does go downhill with me. But once it was different. I remember when it went uphill—all the time. [*Pause.*] I've made changes in my life so often. I can't do it any more. It costs me too much. It demands too much. When I married, I altered everything, in order to live well and have a good position. And I loved Alexander Blumenschøn. He came from the right world for me, and I loved him. But now that's over, because he's going away. Can you tell me why it is I, and I alone, who suffer everlastingly? Every step I take is another step downwards, every step is lower than the last. You must excuse my talking so incoherently—— [*She sits down heavily on a seat.*]

Bast. Did you say downwards? Then you can console

yourself and laugh at everything. It goes downhill with all of us—as the years go by.

Mrs. Gihle. Unfortunately. We mustn't admit it, and we mustn't laugh at it. But we must be aware of it. We still expect to have many years in front of us, and how are we to live through them? For my part, I don't want to die. I want to love Life and never die. Even if things don't go downhill any longer, they couldn't be worse than they are. But you mustn't misunderstand me. Alexander isn't so bad. [*She suddenly gets up.*] What am I talking about—Alexander bad? No. Never. He's the best of all of you. [*With hesitation.*] Yes. Next to you, dear, next to you. Perhaps you don't understand me? I can't express what I mean. Can't you help me a little? You won't? Then I must tell you this, Alexander has nothing bad about him. I hope you didn't think I meant that? [*The maids come out of the pavilion and go indoors.*] You're silent? You don't answer?

Bast. The maids could have heard us.

Mrs. Gihle. I didn't see them. Well?

Bast. You needn't have taken the trouble to convince me of what you think of Alexander.

Mrs. Gihle. I think him very nice. He's of good family, he has many relations, some of them in good positions—are you laughing at me?

Bast. No.

Mrs. Gihle. It's only now that I feel things are beginning to go downhill with me again. Now, I mean, that he's going. Not before now, no. He's one of the strongest of

men. The most desperate. He's powerful, he has arms of steel. Perhaps it's because he limps. But I forgive him that for being so strong.

Bast. Let's talk this over quietly. Alexander is engaged now to Fanny Norman. It's all quite natural.

Mrs. Gihle. Natural that she's engaged?

Bast. But——

Mrs. Gihle. And you took her out to-day in your car. Oh, yes, she's really engaged, and she has a cavalier as well.

Bast. And what's he worth?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't know. You're always asking questions. I think Alexander has been weak: he lets her keep him. Well, why should I mind if he doesn't care about her? I'm glad of it. But it's the only thing I am glad about. He can't be anything but what he is. He would always limp. He can only clasp, he cannot strike you down. That's why he has a friend in Lynum—why shouldn't he? And then there's nothing wrong between Fanny and her cavalier. Very far from it. Perhaps she's deceived him a little——

Bast. Hasn't he deceived her?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't know. Anyhow, he's married. And you can leave her out of it.

Bast. You can take it from me that if I do anything, it will be in spite of her cavalier.

Mrs. Gihle. But why should you do anything?

Bast. Why should I?

Gihle. [*Coming out.*] If you don't mind, we're waiting.

Bast. You must excuse me. I was getting the glasses. We must have them.

Gihle. Yes, of course. [*He returns to the pavilion, talking to Bast as he goes. Lynum and Blumenschøn appear on the other side of the fountain.*]

Blumenschøn. Are we disturbing you?

Mrs. Gihle. What makes you believe it?

Blumenschøn. One doesn't know what to believe nowadays. We saw a man go in there not very long ago. Into the house.

Mrs. Gihle. A man? I expect it was Bast. He went in to get the maids to bring some glasses. I'd forgotten to tell them.

Blumenschøn. He needn't have locked the door behind him.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Taking him by the arm.*] Aren't you just a little bit jealous, Alexander? Just a little bit?

Blumenschøn. I'm angry about that grey-headed fellow. One old man ought to be quite enough for you.

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't say that. But tell me, have you missed me?

Blumenschøn. Both of them are worn out. Their eyes are sunken. And what does Bast look like rigged out in that huge round hat and long mane? What does he want with you? Did he come here to warm his hands in yours?

Lynum. Oh, Blumen!

Blumenschøn. [*Turning on him.*] I must ask you not to call me that. I won't have it. My name is too good a name to be mangled by you.

Lynum. You can call me a block of wood for all I care.

Blumenschøn. Yes. That wouldn't matter to you. But it does matter to me. I am the bearer of one of the greatest names in this small country. My name's not as common as Olsen. I have Swiss blood in my veins, my friend.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Interceding.*] There's no reason to insist on calling him that, Lynum.

Blumenschøn. I hate anyone taking liberties with my name. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Were you going to smooth things over? In order to get me in a good temper again? Well, really. Are you sure this isn't the other old man's birthday too?

Mrs. Gihle. I wish you wouldn't always go on talking about the "old man."

Blumenschøn. Mayn't I? It seems to me that I and Lynum are in a madhouse, visiting the inmates. Bast's doing his entrance examination now. Those old fellows are splendid; both of them are obsessed by the importance of being a hundred years old. They think it the duty of the whole of mankind to fuss over them, and fetch them things. Let them all go to——. But the youngest of the three is the most interesting of all. I don't think he could see a brick wall at a few paces.

Mrs. Gihle. What's the matter with him? [*Takes Blumenschøn by the arm and looks into his face.*] I suppose he isn't—I mean, just the slightest bit——?

Blumenschøn. [*Freeing himself.*] No. You women always think that if a man says anything at all, it's because he can't help it. Women are like that.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Laughing.*] What foolish creatures women must be!

Lynum. [*Taking Blumenschøn by the arm.*] You must excuse my interfering.

Blumenschøn. I wish you'd let my arm go.

Lynum. What's the matter with him?

Mrs. Gihle. I think I know, Alexander. Is he as old as all that? His hair's going grey, but is he old? Is there old age in his eyes? No. You're wrong. They're piercingly bright.

Blumenschøn. Very well. Defend him if you like. You're welcome.

Mrs. Gihle. [*More enthusiastically.*] If I only could! Do you think I could, Lynum?

Blumenschøn. [*With exaltation.*] Oh, yes. You'll get him. You'll get his body. Lynum will kill him for you. You say he's not old? No, he's young—like one of us. Did you hear that, Lynum? But have you ever seen anyone more crazy?

Mrs. Gihle. I think he's magnificent.

Blumenschøn. Oh, no. You don't. You told me yourself he was old, at my house to-day. [*The car drives up and stops at the gate.*] There comes his bath chair! Ugh! [*More quietly.*] But it doesn't matter. You're only trying to make me more—just the slightest bit more——

Mrs. Gihle. Then don't go to South America.

Blumenschøn. Why should you interest yourself in me? Let me go.

Mrs. Gihle. Very well. Then I'll get Bast to stay.

Blumenschøn. [*Scornfully.*] Do you know what you ought to do? You ought to get rid of both of us. And in future, get rid of any others like us. That's what you ought to do.

Lynum. [*Putting his arm through Blumenschøn's.*] Now, listen.

Blumenschøn. Let go, I tell you. My arms are all right. It's my foot that isn't all it might be. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] What you want is a grown-up daughter to look after you.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Laughs painfully.*] Is that what you think I want?

Blumenschøn. Yes. And I think I know someone who would do. Someone as old as the mother. She'd be good company for you.

Mrs. Gihle. You needn't say all you think.

Lynum. [*Dragging Blumenschøn along without further ceremony.*] Come along.

Gihle. [*Comes out shaking his head and talking loudly.*] No. I won't do it. No. It's not a drawn game. Not at all. You must have another look at it. [*He is followed by Teodor.*] Are you there, Juliane? He can't do it. It's absolutely wild tactics.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To herself.*] Wild? I expect it was.

Gihle. You're not listening to me, Juliane. If he ever managed to play right twice, his third move was sure to be wrong.

Mrs. Gihle. Mr. Bast's?

Gihle. Yes. Don't you hear me? That's what I keep explaining.

Mrs. Gihle. That's all right, Father. I expect Per Bast doesn't understand chess. Not everyone can play with you.

Gihle. I know. I've not played chess for two generations for nothing. He's too young. [*He notices the cold and tries to feel whether his overcoat is buttoned up.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't be angry with him. He did his best.

Gihle. It's made me feel cold right through.

Mrs. Gihle. Do you feel cold?

Gihle. Yes. It made my feet cold to see him play.

Mrs. Gihle. You should go in and lie down.

Gihle. Do you think so? But I've got to consider the others. You needn't tell them where I am, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. No. I won't.

Gihle. I think you might say I had to go and attend to some urgent business.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, Father, I'll tell them that.

Gihle. Say I had a visitor who came on very urgent business. But you mustn't let our guests go home.

Mrs. Gihle. I'll see they don't.

Gihle. Thank you, Juliane. No. He couldn't play up to my standard. Perhaps you think he didn't try. Of course he did. I'll always maintain that.

Mrs. Gihle. Oh, yes.

Gihle. Always. For he's a clever man, a very clever man. And then he drove the whole deputation home. That was very kind of him. Still, he thought he'd like to play chess with me.

Mrs. Gihle. Oh, no——

Gihle. Oh, yes. But he was too young. The young are

incapable of anything, Juliane. Fancy him attacking an old chess warrior like me! An old lion!

Mrs. Gihle. Well?

Gihle. An old fox! No, he wasn't old enough, not mature enough. But he insisted on trying. Youth is fit for very little, after all. And then he kept on telling me that he played chess as they did in the Argentine. If he weren't an excellent——

Mrs. Gihle. I think you two had better go in now before anyone comes.

Gihle. Of course he *is.* I'll always maintain that. [*Gihle goes into the house. He is followed by Teodor. Lynum and Blumenschøn return. Bast comes out of the pavilion.*]

Bast. [*Speaking frem where he is.*] I couldn't do it.

Mrs. Gihle. I hear you've finished.

Bast. Yes. I don't know all the moves, but I did what I could.

Lyman. Has your husband gone in?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. And I was to ask you all to excuse him. A caller came to see him. But he told me to tell you that none of you were to go on any account. We must think of something to do to amuse ourselves till he's free.

Blumenschøn. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] You must forgive me for what happened just now. Lynum has been talking to me seriously about it.

Mrs. Gihle. Oh?

Blumenschøn. Can't you forget it?

Mrs. Gihle. Of course. We've often quarrelled before. [*Smiling.*] You're quite mad, you know.

Bast. I've got an idea. How long will your husband be engaged?

Mrs. Gihle. Oh! Not long.

Blumenschøn. For an hour at least.

Bast. Then I invite everyone to come to my hotel for an hour. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] You and your whole court. [*Lynum fetches his cloak at once.*]

Mrs. Gihle. We couldn't do that.

Bast. I admit I know nothing about manners and customs. But I think it might be very amusing for all of you. I could show you some specimens and curios from South and Central America. And I have a snake too! Do come. My car's waiting here.

Blumenschøn. Speaking for myself, I can't leave here. I am expecting a message.

Bast. What nonsense! You can have that sent on to the hotel.

Mrs. Gihle. But I——

Bast. Where are your things? In the hall? [*He leads her into the hall. Lynum puts on his cloak.*]

Blumenschøn. Where have you got to? Are you coming?

Lynum. Of course. We might get an opportunity there.

Blumenschøn. [*Impatiently.*] Can't you see you mustn't shoot one another?

Lynum. No, I can't. And I wish you'd keep quiet.

Blumenschøn. Have you thought that my whole position in the Argentine may be thrown away by it? [*Bast comes out on to the verandah with the two maids.*]

Bast. Alexander. Just tell the maids about that mes-

sage. [*He proceeds to do so himself.*] Now listen, Tusmeralda, and you too, Louisetta. If a messenger comes here and asks for anyone of the name of Blumenschøn, tell the messenger he will find him at the Bristol. At the Hotel Bristol. Now don't forget that. Come inside and I'll explain it to you all over again. [*Bast and the maids go into the house.*]

Blumenschøn. He's gone in again! He really is—— But I won't have him shot, Lynum. I tell you that.

Lynum. I wish you'd be quiet. [*Mrs. Gihle comes out of the house, wearing a cloak. Bast follows her.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I'm not sure this is right.

Lynum. I think it'll be great fun.

Bast. [*Calling out.*] Chauffeur. We're coming now.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To all of them.*] You mustn't make a noise in the street. What would the public think?

Bast. [*Smiling.*] You're always thinking of the public.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, I know. I don't want to look foolish. [*They all go off to the car.*]

CURTAIN

Act III.

Act III.

[*On the curtain rising, the scene is in darkness. The door at the back is open, and the distant sounds of a café string orchestra can be heard. Light shines in from the corridor. The first waiter puts his hand round the door, switches on the light, and disappears. All those present at the end of the previous act come in and take off their coats and wraps. Lynum throws his uniform cloak over the back of a chair. The first waiter enters last. When he closes the door the music is no longer heard. The place is now seen to be the* salon *of a hotel. It is well decorated. There are three doors, one in each wall. Now and then, during the act, bells are heard ringing in the corridor.*]

Bast. Turn on the other lights. Light the candelabrum. Where's my boy?

First Waiter. [*Lighting the candelabrum.*] He's outside with the maids, sir.

Bast. Evidently. That's Jack all over. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] You must find yourself a comfortable chair. What would you like to have?

Mrs. Gihle. What shall I say? What would you all like?

Lynum. Grapes.

Mrs. Gihle. I felt so strange when I got to the hotel. It seemed so odd to come upstairs here, and listen to that kind of music. It's put me in a good humour. What about a little champagne?

Bast. [*Nodding to the waiter.*] You know the brand I like. [*The waiter goes out.*] I'm glad you're in a good humour.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. But it was almost—what shall I say—a sad mood. It's such a long time since I've been in an hotel.

Bast. That's not good for anyone.

Mrs. Gihle. We used to have fêtes once, I remember.

Blumenschøn. Yes. Like this. Don't begin thinking of the past, Mrs. Gihle. Or you, Lynum. What's the matter with you all to-night?

Lynum. What do you think?

Bast. You seem depressed. But I expect you'll get over it.

Mrs. Gihle. If we kept that door open we could hear the music.

Bast. We could easily have some music here. [*Crosses to the bell and rings it.*] Yes. We do seem depressed, don't we? [*To the second waiter, who answers the bell.*] Ask the manager to come here, please.

Second Waiter. The manager? Or the proprietor, sir?

Bast. [*Smiling.*] Call the proprietor; then we shall be sure to get the manager. [*The second waiter goes out. To Mrs. Gihle.*] I hope you won't get into too religious a mood!

Mrs. Gihle. No. It's over now. It was the music and

the air here. I'm quite all right again. [*The first waiter brings in champagne and cigars, he fills and hands round the glasses.*]

Lynum. Bravo!

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. It's much jollier drinking champagne away from home.

Bast. Now, Alexander, you're the only gloomy one. We others are quite pleased with ourselves. You look as if you'd lost all your money.

Blumenschøn. I? [*Pulling out a roll of notes.*] I've got three thousand crowns here. Besides a job in the Argentine.

Lynum. Are you so sure of that job in the Argentine? You're certain it's not an illusion?

Blumenschøn. I hope it's not.

Bast. There's always a post waiting for you there. And if I were to make a fool of myself and get wiped off the map —well, you've got the address. [*To the waiter.*] Send a car to the Normans' house to fetch a young lady. It's not far.

Blumenschøn. [*Interposing.*] I won't have it.

Bast. Tell her her fiancé's here.

Mrs. Gihle. What are you thinking of? [*Lynum jumps up.*]

Bast. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Don't you agree with me that Alexander wants livening up a little? [*He nods to the waiter, who goes out: and takes up his glass.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I wish I'd been asked about this first—— I never did care for my own sex!

Bast. But surely you care enough for Alexander not to

grudge him a pleasure! Good health to all of you!

Lynum. Are both these rooms yours, by the way?

Bast. [*Pointing to the right.*] Yes. And that one too. That's where my boy and the snake live.

Lynum. [*Pointing to the left.*] Perhaps I could have a word with you in there later?

Bast. Yes. Your health. [*They all drink. The manager now comes in and bows.*] I should like to have some music up here. In the boy's room.

The Manager. Music? [*He shakes his head.*] The orchestra is playing in the café, sir.

Bast. I know. But we can't hear them. Can't you split them in half for an hour? And send us up a few?

The Manager. I'll see what I can do, sir.

Mrs. Gihle. Some strings. A 'cello——

The Manager. [*Bowing.*] I'll do what I can. I might be able to manage it, madame.

Bast. Send us the best players you've got. [*The manager bows and goes out.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You've a remedy for everything, Bast!

Lynum. [*To Bast.*] There's no one quite like you! And as you live in South America, I dare say you even have a revolver about you?

Mrs. Gihle. What are you talking about?

Lynum. I'm a soldier. I'm interested in fire-arms.

Bast. [*Producing a revolver from his hip-pocket.*] Of course I have a revolver.

Lynum. Good. You've got everything. Perhaps you've another?

Bast. [*Producing a second revolver from his other hip-pocket.*] At your service.

Lynum. Splendid! An American make—— [*He involuntarily stretches out his hand to take it.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Put them away again. [*Bast does so.*] Do you really need to go about armed like that in your own country?

Bast. No. But it has its advantages. Now and again it's useful. Sit down, Lynum. I won't offend you by supposing you were a little troubled at the sight.

Lynum. I was very glad to see them. You're not a child. Only men carry such weapons. May I drink to you? [*They drink.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I wish you'd turn those dangerous things out of your pockets.

Lynum. Of course they're not loaded.

Bast. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] It might be as well. Because they *are* loaded. [*He puts them on the top of the piano.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Thank you. Do you always carry arms?

Bast. [*Who from now on is quiet and good-tempered.*] We bosses often do.

Lynum. When you're over here you're always particularly South American. Isn't it so? I don't especially mean you.

Mrs. Gihle. That's not true. Blumenschøn's going to start carrying weapons now.

Blumenschøn. It's unnecessary.

Mrs. Gihle. I suppose you mean your own arms are quite strong enough?

Blumenschøn. Yes. That's why my legs aren't what they might be. I don't need to run away.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Bast.*] Surely you never shoot anyone?

Bast. Oh, very seldom.

Mrs. Gihle. But have you ever done it?

Bast. It's always possible to make an enemy. And it's dangerous out there to have enemies. In that case, things have to be settled.

Lynum. Quite right, too.

Mrs. Gihle. I can't see it. Why not come to some kind of understanding?

Bast. Of course one tries that first.

Mrs. Gihle. What, for instance?

Bast. Smiling a little before striking.

Mrs. Gihle. So you do strike?

Bast. I suppose so. When the smiling's over.

Mrs. Gihle. But your enemy wouldn't have had time to do anything.

Bast. No? Well, of course I only strike him so as to induce him to try and strike back—if he dares!

Mrs. Gihle. That's all very odd. It comes to this: a smile and a blow, and then you begin shooting.

Lynum. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] I suppose you never met a South American before?

Mrs. Gihle. I quite believe what he says. Now you see, Blumenschøn, what's waiting for you out there. [*Fredriksen and some musicians arrive with their instruments and music, followed by the first waiter.*]

Lynum. Here are the musicians! [*He sits down.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*With an exclamation.*] Fredriksen! So you're playing here?

Fredriksen. [*Bowing.*] Yes. At the Hotel Bristol. In the café.

Mrs. Gihle. Did you get back in time? Were you fined?

Fredriksen. No. Thanks to the car. And to you too, Mrs. Gihle.

Bast. [*Pointing.*] In there. [*The first waiter shows the musicians into the Boy's room.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Don't play loudly, Fredriksen. Keep it down.

Fredriksen. Would you like us to play anything in particular?

Mrs. Gihle. No. I've forgotten everything. Something soft. [*Fredriksen bows and follows the others into the Boy's room.*]

Bast. Now we've got *so* far, your health!

Mrs. Gihle. Who ever would have thought it? He was such a promising player. Of course he was older than I, but I remember how merry and pleasant he used to be. Now he's neither: he's only apathetic. And once the whole world was open to him. He arranged long concert tours and played divinely. Later on he played for us on concert platforms. Now he's here in the café. Always downwards, step by step. Whenever I meet him, and that's not often, he seems humiliated.

Blumenschøn. I can quite well believe that.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. But one should never humble oneself. Things may be bad enough as they are. One shouldn't heed

one's misery. If I am proud now, why shouldn't I be prouder still in a few years' time.

Blumenschøn. It's drudgery, age, and feebleness. [*The first waiter comes back from the Boy's room.*]

Bast. Get me the other waiter, will you? I want both of you.

Mrs. Gihle. What do you want both of them for?

Bast. I want to choose one to do an errand for me. It will flatter the one I choose, and then I know he'll do his best for me. [*The two waiters come in. Bast looks at them.*] Is there a chance of getting any flowers to-night? [*Both waiters shake their heads.*]

Head Waiter. All the shops are closed.

Bast. [*To the second waiter.*] I'm sure you can do it for me. We must have some flowers. The cashier will give you the money.

Second Waiter. I'll try, sir, but——

Bast. I'm sure you'll do it. Try the back door of the shop; if that's shut, break into the place. We must have some flowers. [*He nods to the waiter, who bows and goes out.*]

First Waiter. Anything else, sir?

Bast. I think you'll find a messenger in the vestibule looking for someone of the name of Blumenschøn. [*The first waiter retires. Next door they begin to play a Strauss waltz.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Listen! Thank you so much, Bast! [*She drinks with him.*] I still keep thinking of what you said about shooting one another in the Argentine.

Bast. Don't be alarmed about that. He'll soon get used to it.

Mrs. Gihle. What? To being shot? And what about the others? You mustn't joke about it in that way. One day, perhaps, you'll meet your master.

Bast. Well! There'll be no help for it then! My last farewell will be to you, I promise you that. [*He lifts his glass to her. They drink.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You shouldn't promise any such thing.

Blumenschøn. What is it you're promising one another? Listen, Bast. You promised *us* to show us some curios.

Lynum. I don't think he's got any.

Bast. I thought we might have waited till Fanny Norman came; it's just as you like. But they're in there, where the band is. I've some weapons, cooking utensils, and such-like. Alexander, you're nearest the bell. Ring it four times for the Boy. [*Blumenschøn rings as directed.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What do you want the Boy to come in here for?

Bast. He won't be here long. You shouldn't look down on him: he's a courageous lad. His relations were the same. His father was just like him. In fact, he got hanged for it.

Mrs. Gihle. For what?

Bast. Oh, at an out-of-the-way *estancia* he got hold of a white woman. She had no revolver. That was all. So we hanged him.

Mrs. Gihle. And you had something to do with that? [*Clasping her hands.*] Heaven help me! And you took

that man's son into your service afterwards? Was this the boy you offered to give me?

Bast. Yes. Willingly. He's really not at all stupid. He learnt Norwegian from the maids at home in a few weeks. And he drives well, and understands horses. [*The first waiter returns, followed by the Boy, who walks straight over to Bast and remains standing. Silence. Neither Lynum nor Blumenschøn looks up.*]

First Waiter. No messenger has come for anyone of the name of Blumenschøn.

Bast. Really? Bring some wine for the musicians, with you? Some champagne. There's a door leading into the corridor, isn't there?

First Waiter. Yes, sir.

Bast. Then you can use that. [*The waiter goes out. Mrs. Gihle has risen and stares absent-mindedly at the Boy.*]

Bast. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Will he disturb the players by going in there to fetch the things?

Mrs. Gihle. Why should he go in there at all?

Bast. Don't you want him to get the snake?

Blumenschøn. [*Looking up, surprised.*] Good Heavens! What an exhibition! [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] You *are* getting zoological.

Mrs. Gihle. I? Oh, let him go if you like. I only——

Bast. [*To the Boy.*] You can go. [*The Boy goes out.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Sitting down.*] I wasn't thinking what I was doing. I haven't seen a black man for such a long time. Is he really grown up?

Bast. Yes. He's eighteen.

Mrs. Gihle. It was like meeting an old acquaintance. We used to have them at the theatres. [*As Blumenschøn laughs.*] I mean, at the Variety theatres. [*The music stops.*]

Blumenschøn. It swarms with niggers almost everywhere.

Mrs. Gihle. Some of them, I remember, sang quite well. What was it you said I was getting, just now, when the Boy was here?

Blumenschøn. Zoological.

Mrs. Gihle. Perhaps there's something in it. [*The first waiter shows Fanny Norman in. They exchange greetings.*]

Bast. I'm very glad to see you.

Fanny. So you're all here? I thought you were at Mrs. Gihle's.

Mrs. Gihle. Mrs. Gihle is here too.

Bast. We're filling in the time and amusing ourselves as best we can. It's very nice of you to come.

Blumenschøn. You've been very quick, Fanny!

Fanny. [*Taking off her coat, but keeping it by her.*] Am I too early?

Blumenschøn. Were you sitting waiting to come?

Fanny. [*To the others.*] You see, I'm sure I'm too soon!

Bast. Not at all. We were waiting for you. May I help you? [*He takes her coat and puts it carefully on one side.*]

Fanny. [*To Bast.*] I must thank you for taking me out in the car. We simply flew.

Bast. Oh! Yes. We went much too fast. And since then I've often driven that drive in my thoughts. [*To all of them.*] I hope you'll all drink to Fanny Norman. [*They do so.*]

Fanny. [*Looking round.*] What an expensive room you've got here!

Blumenschøn. Fanny!

Fanny. Perhaps I shouldn't have said that. But it does look so fine.

Blumenschøn. Bast has other things as well. He has a regular stock of them in there. Even a snake and a nigger.

Fanny. Really! [*The music recommences.*] And music too! This is very nice. [*She goes to the door on the right and is on the point of opening it.*] May I just peep in?

Blumenschøn. [*Calling to her.*] Fanny!

Fanny. [*Coming back.*] I'm sorry.

Bast. Now we're all here, what's going to happen?

Mrs. Gihle. Do you think anything's going to happen?

Lynum. Bast's uneasy about something. Sit down, Bast. We're not, if you are.

Bast. Lynum is bored. What shall we do with him? [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Shall we telephone for his wife? [*Fanny laughs.*]

Lynum. [*Gets up and takes a sudden interest in this.*] Is that anything to laugh at? [*He laughs immoderately, goes to the piano, and looks at the revolvers. The second waiter brings in a lot of flowers.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Oh! What lovely flowers!

Bast. [*Taking them.*] Did you have to break into the place to get them?

Waiter. No. I got in by the back way. [*He bows and retires.*]

Bast. These dark ones are for you, because you're blonde. [*He divides the flowers into two unequal parts, and hands the bulk of them to Fanny.*]

Fanny. Are all these for me? It's too kind of you.

Bast. It's nothing. You ought to have masses of flowers. [*He crosses to Mrs. Gihle and hands her the rest of the flowers.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Thank you. [*To Fanny.*] He has given me plenty already. A whole bouquet. [*She puts the flowers down.*]

Fanny. It's something new for me. No one ever gave me such flowers before. [*Giving him her hand.*] Thank you ever so much.

Bast. [*Retaining her hand for a few moments.*] And no one ever thanked me so nicely before. [*Fanny sits down with her flowers.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Lynum, what are you doing there? You're a continual danger.

Lynum. I'm interested in fire-arms.

Mrs. Gihle. Are those revolvers really loaded?

Lynum. That was just what I wanted to find out.

Mrs. Gihle. But Bast told us they were.

Bast. [*To Lynum.*] I agree with Mrs. Gihle. You shouldn't handle those weapons. I don't think you'd hit any of us, but you might easily shoot yourself. [*He sits down by Fanny.*]

Blumenschøn. You're wrong there, my friend. Lynum always hits what he aims at.

Lynum. [*Putting down the revolvers.*] I don't want your testimony, Blumenschøn.

Blumenschøn. You see! That's how we Blumenschøns are treated in this country! It's no good trying to introduce culture here. [*They all laugh a little.*] And I'm laughed at on top of it too!

Lynum. I'm sorry. But you're leaving this country day after to-morrow?

Blumenschøn. To-morrow, I hope.

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] Yes. Day after to-morrow, at latest. I'm taking your fiancé away from you. But I think you ought to marry him to-day and come out with us.

Lynum. [*To Blumenschøn.*] Do you hear what he wants?

Blumenschøn. [*Half jokingly.*] I daren't try that! What do you think, Fanny?

Fanny. I think what you do.

Blumenschøn. So you daren't try it either. You think it's dangerous?

Fanny. Dangerous? Who for?

Blumenschøn. Well. For you.

Lynum. No. She sees no dangers in what's a compliment to herself. [*Mrs. Gihle gets up.*]

Fanny. I don't know what you're talking about.

Blumenschøn. That's right, Fanny. Don't take any notice of them. [*Fanny rises and whispers in Blumenschøn's ear.*]

Fanny. Are you really pleased with me for once, Alexander?

Blumenschøn. I? Of course I am!

Lynum. Is there any reason why we shouldn't see these wonderful things of Bast's?

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] Would you like to look at some Indian lances, pottery and suchlike?

Fanny. Yes. I should.

Mrs. Gihle. I don't want to see that kind of thing. Haven't you any costumes?

Bast. No. The native costumes are——

Lynum. Non-existent, what? After all, it's pretty hot in the Argentine.

Bast. In summer, yes. In winter the natives dress much as we do. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] But you wanted to see native costumes?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, I did. [*The music ceases.*]

Fanny. [*Looking at her dress and sitting down.*] You're all so smart here. I came in what I had on. I oughtn't to have.

Bast. It's quite all right. You wouldn't call *me* smart, would you? Your health! [*They drink.*] Perhaps it's just as well you're not sailing with us. If you did come to South America someone might start a revolution in your honour. You never know.

Lynum. Can't we open a door or a window somewhere? It's getting as hot as the Argentine in here.

Mrs. Gihle. Do you object if I ask Fredriksen in to drink a glass of champagne with us?

Bast. Not at all. I have sent some wine in there for them.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. But I should like someone to talk to. [*She opens the door on the right and calls.*] Fredriksen!

Fredriksen. Yes, madame. [*He comes out.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Won't you drink a glass with us?

Bast. [*Rising and pouring out some wine.*] Please do.

Fredriksen. Many thanks. But our American has provided plenty for us.

Mrs. Gihle. Are you as fond of champagne as you used to be?

Fredriksen. I like it now and then. I get tired of everlasting whisky.

Mrs. Gihle. You've been playing very charmingly. What was the last thing you played?

Fredriksen. I must be careful how I answer such a great singer.

Mrs. Gihle. Is it something of your own? I thought it was delightful.

Fredriksen. It was the kind of stuff we always play. Something for topers to listen to in cafés.

Mrs. Gihle. Have you any special reason for being so depressed to-day?

Fredriksen. No. Not to-day: quite the opposite. You've been so kind as to help our funds with such liberality. And as far as I'm concerned, I've had a good allowance of champagne. More than that, I'm with young, happy and wealthy people. It's a very exceptional day for me.

Blumenschøn. With all that talk Fredriksen simply means to say that he's not used to so much champagne every evening. He might have cut it short.

Mrs. Gihle. On the contrary; Fredriksen and I are not going to cut it short. Won't you have another glass? [*Bast pours it out.*]

Fredriksen. No one could disobey you. [*He drinks.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Have you been playing here long?

Fredriksen. Oh, yes. For years. It's not so bad. There are always a lot of people, and they seem to put up with us. Besides, I feel I have a mission on my platform.

Mrs. Gihle. To make good music?

Fredriksen. That's a compliment! No, I have another mission in life. I get to know most of the guests here, and I always try to do my best for them. Some of them were young and rich once—as you are now—but life outpaced them, and the café became their home. There they sit for years—old, hardened habitués—and then disappear—. It's all very interesting. They seem to sink into the earth, or their threadbare coats keep them in their lodgings, or they die, or they get married, or bury themselves in the country—anyhow their story is done. But all the time others are growing up to take their place, and these soon step into the limelight, and grow very like their predecessors. I keep an eye on them from the platform, and I watch life getting harder and harder for them too. At last they have to start selling their things so as to be able to come to the café. Then they have to begin moving from table to table, trying to beg a whisky at one, a crown

to pay for their dinner at another! And that's where my mission comes in.

Mrs. Gihle. And what is it?

Fredriksen. Why, to play them a merry waltz to cheer them. So that they can meet disaster with flying colours. It's philanthropy.

Fanny. Oh! It's terrible.

Fredriksen. You must excuse me. I mustn't depress the company. It's often jolly in the café. We're not so dull. We find it very amusing. I was sitting down there just now and nearly discovered a new oath.

Lynum. What? A new oath? Let's hear it.

Fredriksen. It's not ready yet. And people of to-day won't understand it. It belongs to the future.

Fanny. [*To Bast.*] What is he talking about? What did he nearly discover?

Bast. [*Looking at her and smiling.*] Ask again. You did it so sweetly.

Lynum. [*Getting up, and pointing to the room on the left. To Bast.*] May I be allowed to have a few words with you in there?

Bast. No. [*To Fanny.*] No one can be sweeter than a young girl. A girl like you. And you're blonde as well. I saw it at once when you came up to your fiancée. I think I gave a gasp.

Blumenschøn. [*Smiling overbearingly.*] I hope you don't believe all he says, Fanny?

Fanny. You are all so—I'm quite bewildered here. But I'm enjoying it immensely.

Lynum. [*Close to Bast, whispering.*] Later on, you and I are going to exchange shots.

Fanny. What? Are you going to shoot one another?

Bast. You shouldn't believe everything he says—between drinks. Sit down, Lynum.

Mrs. Gihle. I've been thinking over what you said just now, Fredriksen. Will you have another glass? [*Bast pours him out one.*]

Fredriksen. You have a great gift for understanding me. [*He drinks.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You musn't be so bitter, Fredriksen. I can't see how the fact that people get shipwrecked in this life can be of satisfaction to you.

Fredriksen. Why not? I admit I have to strengthen my heart with a good deal of whisky before I can stand it. Of course it's no real satisfaction. Only the worst kind of people could find it that. But as I always said: drink and music are Death and Life! [*He laughs.*] And so I sit on the platform like a little expiring spark of life. And I watch [*he indicates with his first finger*] the other little sparks dancing in the café. Then all of us can meet disaster with flying colours.

Mrs. Gihle. You musn't drink any more, Fredriksen.

Fredriksen. [*Continuing.*] Sometimes we sit and look at one another. The waiters will do nothing for us now for less than a crown. Yet once we used to fling our money about.

Blumenschøn. This isn't very exhilarating, is it?

Fredriksen. [*Still continuing.*] There's a good deal of

pleasure in life, but it's always of the same kind. It's only imagination that makes it different to us. And I sometimes get *some* pleasure out of the fact that many are worse off than I am. We're all on the way to the scaffold. Present company, of course, excepted!

Blumenschøn. I like that! But misfortunes have their pleasant side. One gets a taste for them; one thrives on them. One must be a cipher if one wants never to change and never to perish.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fredriksen.*] I dare say there's a lot in what you say. But I know you didn't always hold such views. You're able and industrious, and I've heard you have a nice home.

Fredriksen. That's no credit to me, but to my wife and daughter.

Mrs. Gihle. You're underestimating yourself.

Fredriksen. Do you think so? You're too good. But they do keep the home together. I don't know how: I think it all comes from Heaven. In former times it was chiefly my wife who earned the money. Now my grown-up daughter earns still more. Both of them must be busy as bees. But we certainly have a comfortable home.

Mrs. Gihle. You're cleverer than you think, Fredriksen. It was you who made me see the importance of your Confederation and its Fund. You made a socialist of me almost at once.

Fredriksen. You don't say so, Mrs. Gihle? I'm so glad to hear it. It shows I can do something.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Smiling.*] That's your humour! Do

you know what I've been thinking? Your daughter has about the same figure as I have. I've some dresses put away, silk and velvet ones, which might suit her. Might I share them with her?

Fredriksen. You are really—— If I had a full glass I'd drain it in your honour.

Mrs. Gihle. Don't drink any more now. But come and see me and I'll be only too glad to give you the dresses.

Fredriksen. You are as you always were. We must make you honorary member of our Confederation.

Mrs. Gihle. I should appreciate that very much. You must come in some time when you're passing. To-night, on your way home, if you like.

Fredriksen. I'm always glad to earn something for the household. It'll be the first time for two years I've brought my daughter a frock home—in fact, since she's been grown up.

Mrs. Gihle. Now you're beginning again——

Fredriksen. You misunderstand me. I'm not a cipher. Last New Year I counted up my good points, and I had eighteen of them. [*There is general laughter at this.*] Yes, ladies and gentlemen, many people start life with fewer. And if I get my hair cut, and have a shave, and pull down my waistcoat—like this—I can look tolerable. Tolerable. But my hair must be cut first.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Fredriksen does look "tolerable," doesn't he? What do you think?

Fanny. I? [*To Bast.*] Must I say anything? I don't understand.

Lynum. Blumenschøn, your hair's cropped too close to go to the Argentine. You'll get sunstroke. Just look at—whatever his name is.

Bast. Bast.

Blumenschøn. [*Smiling.*] Yes. Your hair is dreadful, Bast.

Fanny. Perhaps they wear it like that where he comes from.

Bast. No. Far from it. I oughtn't to go about like this. But when I was at home I didn't have a chance to get it cut. And since I got here I haven't had time. But I'll have it done to-morrow.

Fanny. Oh, no. Not to-morrow. Stay like that. I mean——

Bast. Very well. I will.

Fanny. And wear your huge hat too? Oh, do! Put on your sombrero, won't you?

Blumenschøn. I think you're a trifle familiar, Fanny.

Lynum. Only a trifle——?

Fanny. Am I, Alexander? Then I won't do it again. [*To Lynum.*] But it's nothing to do with you.

Lynum. [*Bowing.*] Nothing. You must forgive me.

Bast. [*Crossing and sitting down.*] Do you find *me* "tolerable" now?

Fanny. Oh, yes! You look splendid. [*Rising and whispering to Blumenschøn.*] It is true? May I say that? You mustn't be cross with me, Alexander.

Blumenschøn. Sit down.

Fredriksen. That's a huge hat to wear in this heat,

It makes me feel hot too. [*He takes off his wig and puts it down. There is general consternation at this.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What are you doing? You mustn't do that here!

Fredriksen. I want to get cool. It's so hot.

Bast. But Mrs. Gihle doesn't want this dreadful exhibition.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Bast.*] Why do you speak to him like that? He was the greatest artist who ever played. And on a concert tour he used to earn in an evening what you manage to scrape together in a year. He made the most delightful music in the world. He played Tschaikovsky. What do you know about Fredriksen? What does Fanny Norman know about him either? I understand all he said to me just now—every word of it, and I understand all he does. Two queens gave him jewels; and that much you will be able to understand. But I understand him at all times—even when he's in despair. He only does it to humiliate himself and all the world. And I know what he means by it. I understand him, I belong to the same artistic world. That's why I'm becoming an honorary member of the Confederation. There is room for me there. Here I'm not noticed. I don't know how you can all feel so superior. We have flowers, but he got flowers once, shopfuls of them, carriage-loads of gold and flowers. But he gave them all away, he kept nothing for himself. [*Turning to Fredriksen.*] Isn't it true?

Fredriksen. Yes. That is the eleventh on my list of good points.

Mrs. Gihle. You shouldn't joke now.

Fredriksen. No. It would be better if I were to take my wig under my arm—and go back there with my head bowed. Then the people in the stalls would get what they want.

Mrs. Gihle. It's just like you to spoil everything. [*She throws herself on her chair.*] You're not grateful for any help.

Fredriksen. I think there's some mistake. Does anyone want to do anything for my soul? It's not necessary: my violin's my soul's keeper. Don't let's misunderstand one another. Now, for instance, here's the General's cape. All wrong. A cape of this kind should be folded like this. [*He rearranges Lynum's military cape so that the lining is outside.*] The seam's split here. That'll soon be a little hole. [*He makes it into a hole with his finger.*] Look! [*He steps back and surveys it.*]

Mrs. Gihle. This is all nonsense, Fredriksen. [*The noise of a couple of corks being drawn is heard from the Boy's room.*]

Lynum. [*Laughing.*] Won't you let my cape show its right side?

Fredriksen. Very well. Shall we undo the front? [*Is on the point of unfolding the cape.*]

Bast. [*Rising and going to him.*] No. I think not. And you ought to go and look after your people in there, or they'll be drinking too much. I can hear the corks flying now. [*He puts Fredriksen's wig on his head and leads him out.*]

Mrs. Gihle. We're very fine folk, aren't we? Was it you who laughed at him, Lynum? It wasn't polite of you.

You seem astonished? Well, I didn't get Fredriksen in here to be rude to anyone. But that doesn't matter; I don't mind.

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle, you behaved like a mother to him. You musn't do it any more.

Mrs. Gihle. Like a mother—yes. I'm old enough to be a mother to him.

Blumenschøn. Couldn't you find a more suitable protégé?

Mrs. Gihle. I can't choose my protégés nowadays. And I understand him well, because I used to be on the stage.

Blumenschøn. But we don't understand him. There's no reason to suppose that we take any interest in stage folk at all. That's the truth.

Fanny. Of course it is, Alexander.

Mrs. Gihle. What fine people we are! But you, Blumenschøn, you have taken some interest in stage folk. Yes, you have, Alexander.

Blumenschøn. [*Takes his glass and goes to her.*] You are quiet to-night, after such a strenuous day. [*He drinks with her. Music is again heard from the room on the right, more soulful than before.*]

Fanny. Why does she call him Alexander?

Bast. A slip. Now listen to me. It would be a good thing for everyone if you sailed with us day after to-morrow.

Fanny. I couldn't do it. Go with you both? You don't mean it! Oh, listen to them playing in there now!

Bast. I have been thinking it over. Your fiancée would be happier; you would have a whole house to yourself.

And I should be happier too. Our ranch on the prairie is well enough in its way. But there are no charming girls there. No innocent girls. Think it over.

Fanny. I will.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Blumenschøn.*] Are you looking at him? You said he had sunken eyes, but he hasn't. It doesn't matter? What do I care about him? [*Blumenschøn tries to calm her.*] I don't mind if he does hear me. None of you have sunken eyes. And you look at one another, and then look back again, and exchange bright glances. And she's so young—so very young.

Blumenschøn. Don't speak like that, Mrs. Gihle. You're a beautiful woman yourself. You're tired to-night.

Mrs. Gihle. I shan't give in. You wouldn't mind if I did. But I never will. [*She grasps his hand, and speaks with restrained passion.*] If what the messenger brings you makes you rich and independent, you won't leave me then, will you?

Blumenschøn. [*Trying to get away.*] Mrs. Gihle won't let me go, Fanny.

Fanny. You're talking so strangely there. What's the matter?

Blumenschøn. She says old Gihle will be inconsolable if I go.

Bast. [*To Fanny.*] Let them talk. I have a suggestion to make. If you'll come with us I'll move from our ranch and live at another some distance away.

Blumenschøn. What's that, Bast?

Bast. I'm making plans for you to get married and

take your bride out with you. You don't realize what the ranch will be like without her.

Lynum. We really are trying to be properly American now. [*To Blumenschøn.*] I think Bast will offer to buy the chair your fiancée's sitting on in a minute.

Fanny. [*Laughing a little.*] I never heard anything so absurd.

Lynum. He'll promise to use it as a bookmark. Why don't you laugh at that?

Fanny. [*Crossing to Blumenschøn.*] Alexander, he thinks we ought to do what he suggested! All go out together.

Blumenschøn. Then I shan't move from here. I won't have anything to do with it.

Fanny. I don't know why—— How charming that music sounds! [*She leans over Blumenschøn and puts her arm around him.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What fuss they're making about you! You must pardon me if I've not been kind to you. You must drink with me. [*She gets up.*] Won't you go and sit over there? It suits you better. [*Fanny goes back to her chair and sits down. Mrs. Gihle sits down also.*] You're ill at ease. I must help you.

Blumenschøn. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] We ought to break up soon, oughtn't we?

Mrs. Gihle. But the champagne's so good! And the music! It's gipsy music too. "La Paloma." [*To Fanny.*] I am going to help you now. I shall compromise myself and destroy an idyll. But it's very painful for you to feel

so ill at ease. [*She faces Bast.*] Now listen, Bast. You mustn't kiss me any more to-night. My lips are tender. [*There is general consternation at this. Fanny keeps staring first at Mrs. Gihle and then at Bast.*]

Bast. What's that about kissing?

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't kiss me any more to-night.

Bast. [*Laughing.*] Mayn't I? [*To Fanny.*] Mrs. Gihle's only joking, of course.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Putting her hand to her lips.*] You were so rough. [*To Fanny.*] He's a Don Juan.

Fanny. [*Puts down the flowers and gets up.*] What's that got to do with me? [*She goes to the door on the right and listens.*]

Bast. [*Following her.*] Don't let us drive you away.

Fanny. Mayn't I stay here? I want to be alone and listen to the music.

Bast. [*Going back to his chair, smiling and shaking his head.*] You are a wonderful butterfly, Mrs. Gihle.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Blumenschøn.*] But you're mad. Didn't you see I did it to help you? You be quiet now, Bast, and I won't say anything more.

Bast. But I wish you would. I'm getting inquisitive. You said I kissed you?

Mrs. Gihle. Very roughly. In the hall, before we started to come here. You thought I was one of the maids. [*She laughs.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Jokingly.*] This is beginning to look serious for you, Bast.

Mrs. Gihle. How mad you were!

Fanny. Alexander, come here and listen.

Blumenschøn. It's all a fairy story, Mrs. Gihle. You surely don't let strangers kiss you. What would your husband say to that?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't know. We're used to it on the stage. It means nothing to us.

Bast. [*Still smiling.*] Since we *are* discussing it, it does seem to mean something to you.

Mrs. Gihle. With you—well. I must have forgotten myself.

Blumenschøn. Splendid!

Fanny. Aren't you coming, Alexander?

Mrs. Gihle. What do you mean by "splendid"? I felt someone put his arms round me——

Blumenschøn. I've got arms too. You're nothing but a—— [*The music stops.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You don't thank me?

Blumenschøn. So you let yourself be kissed in the hall! [*He gets up in order to go.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking up at him.*] Are you sure you're not just a tiny little bit——

Blumenschøn. [*Seeing what she means.*] Oh! That's why you wanted to help me? I'll sit down again. [*He sits down and laughs.*] But you're right, you're only compromising yourself, and it won't help me. But thank you all the same. [*He drinks alone.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I help everyone but myself.

Blumenschøn. Do you? Come and sit down, Fanny. What are you standing there for? The music's stopped.

Fanny. It's sure to begin again soon.

Blumenschøn. [*Gets up and goes to her.*] You mustn't

be afraid of any of us. We're not dangerous: we're only foolish. Come here. [*He leads her back to her chair.*] Your health! [*He drinks and sits down by her side.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Suddenly getting up and opening the door on the right.*] Fredriksen.

Fredriksen. [*Entering.*] Yes?

Mrs. Gihle. If you'll accompany me I'll sing.

Fredriksen. Will you really give us that pleasure?

Mrs. Gihle. Don't be polite. You know well enough I can't sing now. But it won't matter. I can speak the words. What was it I used to sing in the old days? Remind me of something.

Fredriksen. There was a song about your legs.

Mrs. Gihle. Which one was it? There were so many. Was it anything really——

Fredriksen. [*With a gesture.*] The most innocent poetical verses.

Mrs. Gihle. Well. It doesn't matter. Accompany me on the piano. Quickly. Let's be really jolly. Just teach me the words again. [*During the following she lifts up her skirts a little and sings slowly with Fredriksen.*]

Fredriksen. If I could only remember it! How did the first verse go? [*He pulls up his trousers and sings.*]

"For I am now in the spring of Life,
And my favourite colour is blue;
To-night I'll go home to my lonely couch
If there's nothing better to do.
Oh! my legs, my legs, my legs,
What a dance you're leading me!"

Then the second verse:

"My days fly by as the filly flies
And I carelesssly go my way.
I may get home to-night—perhaps
But surely by dawn of day.
Oh! my legs, my legs, my legs,
What a dance you're leading me!"

Third verse:

"By night I sail like a star in the sky."

[*Breaking off.*] But I see you remember it. Oh, it was a delight to hear you sing it in the old days. And see you swaying with your legs together in the first verse. Do you remember how everyone, the Princess too, loaded you with flowers? Masses of flowers!

Mrs. Gihle. Play it, Fredriksen. [*Fredriksen at the piano, plays it through again. Mrs. Gihle prepares to begin.*]

Blumenschøn. But now we've heard it!

Mrs. Gihle. All the better. Then we won't go on singing about my legs. Fredriksen, bring your glass here. [*Pours champagne from her glass into his.*] We won't sing. The company's too good for us. Drink. [*Fredriksen pretends to, but does not actually do so.*]

Blumenschøn. The company's much too select. But you're not drinking?

Fredriksen. I had quite enough in there.

Mrs. Gihle. So that's not good enough for you, either? [*Throwing herself into a chair.*]

Bast. [*Going to her.*] I once heard you sing a song about the Daughters of Jerusalem. Won't you give us that?

Mrs. Gihle. I can't sing nowadays, Bast, I can only say the words.

Bast. [*To Fredriksen.*] Anyhow, you seem to play better in there than you do here. [*Fredriksen goes out by the door on the right; Bast continues speaking to Mrs. Gihle.*] Do you remember the time I heard it? It was in a drawing room, and you accompanied yourself. You threw your head back and enchanted us. The song was about the Daughters of Jerusalem. I remember a rich young man going out of the room in the middle of it: later he was found in the hall kissing your fur coat. That night he carried you home shoulder-high! Won't you sing it again now? We'll sit here—and listen to you.

Blumenschøn. So you know her? You've heard her sing? You're old acquaintances?

Bast. Who hasn't heard her sing?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking round.*] Now I'm alone again. But you heard what he said: carriage-loads of flowers? And music and people and thousands of lights? There are a number of you there, but you're not round me! [*She rises and goes to the back, as if walking in her sleep. Questioning and answering herself.*] Juliane? Yes. Where are you? Nowhere. No one knows you now. [*In a louder voice.*] Beautiful Juliane, do you remember all those who used to knock at your door? Yes, I remember them. Some of them had coats of arms on their carriages. And the young Pasha had a golden boat. It is yours, he told you! And he had a castle: he rowed you to it. And he had a wonderful pipe set with diamonds. It is yours, he told you. But years afterwards, hundreds, yes

thousands of years afterwards—here you are. And what do you want? [*Pause.*] I'll never let it all slip away from me. Never. [*She bursts into tears. All those present have been looking at her with astonishment. Some have risen. Bast goes to her, followed by Fanny Norman.*]

Bast. [*Trying to pacify her.*] No. You mustn't sing. You would have sung beautifully, but you're not in the mood. Won't you let me—— [*He hands her to her chair. To Fanny.*] Just speak to her. Comfort her. [*He leaves Mrs. Gihle to Fanny.*]

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle is tired by all these festivities.

Lynum. Can't we see the famous snake now? It would amuse us.

Bast. That's a sensible remark. I'm surprised at you. I'll get hold of the Boy. [*He rings four times.*]

Fanny. [*Trying to calm Mrs. Gihle.*] You mustn't take this seriously. I'm sure you'll sing to us another time. I hope so. Let me loosen your dress a little: just one hook. Sit down now. [*Mrs. Gihle is still standing.*] You mustn't take any notice of what we said. [*Mrs. Gihle restrains herself, and looks at Fanny. The Boy comes in and goes over to Bast, and stands by him, waiting for order.*]

Bast. Fetch in that snake. [*The Boy goes into the room on the right.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Seeing the Boy.*] What does he want in here?

Bast. I thought the ladies would like to see my cobra. It's a very fine specimen.

Fanny. Is it poisonous?

Bast. It's not dangerous. It's in a glass box, with a lid. You needn't be frightened. I'll go with him. [*He follows the Boy off. Lynum crosses to the piano and picks up the two revolvers.*]

Blumenschøn. What are you doing?

Lynum. You be quiet. [*He goes into the Boy's room on the right, carrying the revolvers. He comes back without them and sits down.*]

Blumenschøn. Lynum. Don't do anything foolish. Too much is at stake for me.

Fanny. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Sit down. Can I get you something to drink?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking at her.*] Are you trying to calm me? You're almost a child. And trying to calm the beautiful Juliane! But you're young. I envy you. You're blonde and sweet. [*The Boy re-enters, carrying the glass box in which the snake is kept. He puts it on the floor and goes out by the door at the back.*]

Fanny. There's the snake. But perhaps you can't bear to see——

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking at her.*] What beautiful hair you have! And such hands! I'll give you a ring. It will suit you. [*She takes off a ring.*]

Fanny. I couldn't take it from you.

Mrs. Gihle. Be quiet, child. [*She puts the ring on Fanny's finger.*] See—how well it fits! [*She embraces her.*] You're handsome: I do envy you. [*She leads her to where the box stands. Both bend over it and look at it. Suddenly Mrs. Gihle pulls the sliding lid right out of the box and throws it away. She seizes Fanny and forces her fur-*

ther and further down. Fanny screams: Mrs. Gihle calls out.] It's not dangerous. He said it wasn't dangerous. [*Fanny screams time after time. Lynum and Blumenschøn shout:* Take care! It's a real cobra. It's out. It's out!"]

[*During this the door on the right has been flung open, and Bast has come in. The musicians follow him and look through the doorway.*]

Bast. Take care! Look out! Who ever opened——? Come away there. [*He rushes forward and tries to get the cobra back into the case. He fumbles first in one hip pocket and then in the other for a revolver. Shouting.*] Get me a revolver.

Blumenschøn. [*Shaking Lynum.*] What did you do with them? [*Both he and Lynum try to fetch them but are prevented by what is happening on the floor. Bast cries out suddenly, and throws up his hand. Then he motions Mrs. Gihle away, and she drags Fanny back with her. Lynum and Blumenschøn are close to them. Bast puts his heel on the snake, and throws its body into the case.*]

Bast. [*Pushing the men aside. To Fanny.*] Were you bitten? [*Takes Fanny's arm and gets her under the chandelier.*] Were you bitten, I say?

Fanny. No. I don't think so.

Bast. [*Quickly examining her hands.*] Nowhere? Don't you feel anything?

Fanny. No.

Bast. [*Looking at her and breathing heavily.*] Did it bite you? [*Lets go of Fanny's arm and takes hold of Mrs. Gihle's.*] Or you? [*He examines her.*]

Mrs. Gihle. No. Why do you ask me?

Bast. I was kept in there a moment. Fredriksen was asking whether we wouldn't like a waltz. Who opened the box? [*He jerks his right hand up again.*]

Fanny. [*Crying out.*] You've been bitten. [*She takes his arm and tries to look at his hand.*]

Bast. [*Abruptly.*] No. But I thought I had. [*Straightens himself and waves to the musicians authoritatively to withdraw to the Boy's room.*] Thank Heavens! No one's been bitten.

Mrs. Gihle. Why do you say that? It wasn't really a dangerous snake.

Bast. I want to know who opened the box.

Mrs. Gihle. I did. It wasn't dangerous. Why did you kill it?

Bast. Because it *was* dangerous. [*He puts his hands behind his back and keeps them there. His left hand tightly clasps the first finger of his right.*]

Mrs. Gihle. But I was quite near it. And I held Fanny Norman's hand down. It was only a joke—I didn't know——

Fanny. [*Looking at Bast's back.*] I can see you've been bitten.

Bast. Where are the revolvers?

Mrs. Gihle. If you've been bitten I can't suck out the poison. My mouth's sore.

Bast. No one can suck out cobra poison. Who took the revolvers away?

Lynum. I put them in there.

Bast. Why?

Lynum. Because that's where they're going to be used.

Mrs. Gihle. They're not going to be used anywhere. It's unpleasant here with that dead snake. Let's break up.

Blumenschøn. [*Putting on his coat.*] It's quite time. [*Bast rings.*]

Mrs. Gihle. There was so much noise in here just now, I wonder if the public below heard us.

Blumenschøn. The public!

Mrs. Gihle. I don't want a scandal. I should be very ashamed if they heard anything in the café. [*The first waiter comes in.*]

Bast. [*Speaking to him.*] I shall want cars for the company here. [*The first waiter retires. Lynum puts on his cape.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Now you must all come back home with me.

Bast. You go on. I must speak to the Boy. [*He rings four times.*] He must tidy up here and send the musicians away.

Mrs. Gihle. I see. [*She opens the door on the right and speaks off.*] Fredriksen, don't forget to come and fetch what we were talking about. [*She shuts the door.*] We mustn't make any noise in the street, remember.

Blumenschøn. You got clear-headed again very suddenly. It's wonderful.

Mrs. Gihle. Don't envy me. It's nervous calmness. [*Coolly, to Fanny.*] Suppose it *had* killed you?

Fanny. [*Helping her on with her coat.*] Why did you do such a strange thing?

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle was over-excited, Fanny. You understand. It's over now.

Fanny. [*To Blumenschøn.*] Are you going with her?

Blumenschøn. Yes. I'm expecting a messenger. He's probably waiting for me in the Gihles' garden.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Are you coming too?

Fanny. Did you ask me?

Blumenschøn. Yes. Didn't you hear her?

Fanny. Very well. I'll come as I am. I should like to find out why you call Alexander by his Christian name.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Don't forget your flowers. [*She gives them to her.*] Did I call him Alexander? Take my flowers too, do, please. Won't you? [*A waltz is heard next door.*] They're playing a waltz now.

Bast. To put heart into us! So that we can meet disaster with flying colours. Do you remember what you said?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Giving Bast her hand.*] Thanks for your hospitality. Do come on at once.

Fanny. I must thank you too. Is your hand painful? Couldn't I have done anything?

Bast. [*Bowing to Fanny.*] Thank you for coming. [*He bows low. The men take leave and express their thanks. All go out. Bast tears his coat off at once and violently rips his right shirt sleeve to the elbow. His right first finger is turning blue, and a vein in his wrist is doing the same. The Boy comes in.*]

Bast. [*Holding up his right hand.*] Shoot off that finger.

Boy. [*Looking at Bast's hand and then at the snake's box.*] Bitten! [*He takes his revolver out of his hip-pocket and aims.*]

Bast. [*Impatiently.*] Shoot.

Boy. [*Sinking the revolver.*] It's no use. It's too late. [*Pointing to Bast's wrist.*] Look!

Bast. Then I must go to hospital. [*Seizes his wrist with the left hand and tries to compress the veins. Lynum re-enters through the door at the back.*] What do you want?

Lynum. [*Bowing.*] I thought we might have a chance of settling that little matter now.

Bast. [*Looking at him and bowing.*] Very well. Certainly. I'm getting ready, as you see. You have the weapons.

Lynum. One moment. [*He goes off to the left.*]

Boy. What are you going to do?

Bast. Shoot him.

Boy. [*Shaking his head.*] You haven't time. [*Lynum returns with the two revolvers.*]

Bast. You can take your choice.

Lynum. Either of them!

Bast. [*Taking both revolvers.*] Choose. Who shall have this?

Lynum. I will.

Boy. But you can't——

Bast. [*Giving Lynum the weapon he elected to have.*] Back to the wall. Ready! [*Lynum flings off coat and cape and takes up his position. They both aim.*]

Lynum. [*Sinking his revolver.*] Wait. Why are you using your left hand? Are you left-handed?

Bast. That doesn't matter to you. Fire!

Lynum. Do you want to insult me? I didn't think you were such a knave.

Bast. [*Furiously.*] I can't use my right hand, idiot.

Boy. Because the snake bit him.

Lynum. What's that?

Boy. The snake bit him.

Bast. See here, if you won't believe it. [*He shows him his right hand, then he steps back and repeats in a commanding voice.*] Ready!

Lynum. [*Suddenly.*] No. [*He flings his revolver away.*] I'll wait till you're fit again. [*He puts on his coat, and snatches up his cape; pointing to the weapon.*] I'll keep this as a pledge. [*He pockets it and turns to the Boy.*] Bring him down at once. I'll get a car. *He goes out.*]

Bast. Has he gone? [*The Boy helps him to put on his overcoat.*] The idiot has held us up for several seconds.

[*They both go out. The music still plays on.*]

CURTAIN

Act IV.

Act IV.

[*Drawing Room in Gihle's house. It is furnished with antique furniture. On the wall hang etchings and oil paintings. The first door on the right leads to the Dining Room, the second door to the Kitchen. There is a door on the left and also one at the back. The lamps are lighted.*

A bell rings. The first maid comes in from the kitchen, and opens the door at the back. A part of the hall can now be seen, and a heavily carpeted staircase leading to the first floor. Mrs. Gihle and Fanny come in from the hall. Blumenschøn can be seen taking off his coat.]

Mrs. Gihle. Has your master come down yet?

First Maid. No, but he's awake, madame. A gentleman came just now who wanted to see him. [*She takes Mrs. Gihle's and Fanny's wraps.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Who was it?

First Maid. An elderly gentleman, madame, who used to come here now and again. To sell old furniture. I showed him upstairs. [*She goes out with the wraps.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Won't you sit down? [*Speaking off.*] Come in, Blumenschøn. [*Blumenschøn does so.*] My husband is still engaged. Gislesen has come to see him about selling him that country house.

First maid. [*Coming in from the hall.*] Supper is served, madame.

Mrs. Gihle. But we're not all here yet: Lieutenant Lynum and Per Bast are coming. And my husband's not free either.

First Maid. I took supper upstairs, madame. He rang for it.

Mrs. Gihle. And for his Cousin Teodor as well?

First Maid. Yes, madame, and also for the other gentleman. I was to tell you that they weren't to be disturbed.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Would you mind waiting a little?

Fanny. Not at all. I had some supper before I left home.

Mrs. Gihle. Did a messenger come for anyone of the name of Blumenschøn?

First Maid. No, madame.

Blumenschøn. It's extraordinary. I can't understand it.

Mrs. Gihle. He'll probably come later. [*To Fanny.*] Will you have some wine while we're waiting?

Fanny. No, thank you. Not for me.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Motioning to the maid.*] Please bring in some of the wine we had in the garden. [*The maid goes out through the door leading to the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. It wasn't very pleasant at the hotel towards the end. All that shouting and disturbance! There would have been a dreadful scene if the revolvers hadn't been taken away. I'm sure he would have fired.

Blumenschøn. It was foolish of Bast to be so careless with a dangerous snake.

Mrs. Gihle. It was I who was careless. [*She laughs. Speaking to Fanny.*] I can't think what you must have thought of me. When I pulled off the lid and took hold of your arm.

Blumenschøn. We needn't bother about that now. No one was bitten, thank goodness.

Fanny. It's Mrs. Gihle who keeps talking about it.

Mrs. Gihle. Do I? Are you trying to make yourself believe that I wanted to kill you?

Fanny. I should have to be very imaginative to do that.

Blumenschøn. Imaginative, Fanny? What do you mean?

Fanny. Mrs. Gihle would have to think me very dangerous to herself to want to get rid of me like that.

Blumenschøn. [*Laughing.*] You're quite right. This is all nonsense. Don't let's talk about it any more. [*A bell is heard to ring in the direction of the kitchen.*] Here they are. [*He starts to go to the door leading into the hall, as if to open it.*]

Mrs. Gihle. No. That's in the kitchen. My husband must have rung for something.

Blumenschøn. The other two ought to be here by now. What did Lynum go back for?

Fanny. He said he wanted to telephone to his wife.

Mrs. Gihle. But he could have done that from here. They weren't really going to try and shoot one another, were they? Those madmen!

Fanny. What?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Smiling.*] Who would you be most anxious about?

Blumenschøn. You're only making her embarrassed, Mrs. Gihle. I hope she'd have been most anxious about Bast. Because it's Bast who's going to give me a post in the Argentine. [*The second maid enters from the hall.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What was it my husband rang for?

Second Maid. He would like one of the gentlemen kindly to come upstairs for a moment.

Mrs. Gihle. One of the gentlemen? He thinks we're all here. What are they doing up there?

Second Maid. They're writing, madame. [*She goes towards the door leading to the kitchen, but waits.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Rising.*] I expect they're examining legal documents. You'll get your country house, Mrs. Gihle. They probably want me to witness a signature. [*He starts to go towards the hall door.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I've no use for a country house any longer.

Fanny. [*To Blumenschøn.*] Do you know the way up?

Blumenschøn. Oh, yes.

Fanny. You seem to know the way all over this house.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To the maid.*] Show him upstairs, please. [*The second maid and Blumenschøn go out into the hall.*] Your fiancé has sold us antiques occasionally. He's been up to my husband's study before now.

Fanny. [*Laughing.*] Then he could have found his own way up after all.

Mrs. Gihle. I only said what I did on the spur of the moment, to put you at your ease.

Fanny. Yes. Or yourself.

Mrs. Gihle. My dear child, you're cleverer than I

thought. But you needn't be anxious about your fiancé—or about anyone else.

Fanny. [*Rising and embracing Mrs. Gihle.*] Not really?

Mrs. Gihle. No, my dear, of course not. How young and charming you are! I was like that once: "untouched by life," as it was called in one of the songs I used to sing. You make me think of the old days when I was like what you are now. [*Freeing herself from Fanny.*] Now sit down and be quiet. You're smothering me.

Fanny. Let me stay like this for a little while. I've been frightened of you all the evening. I've been on pins and needles. But I'm not afraid of you now; you're kinder than I thought. Yes, you are!

Mrs. Gihle. So you don't believe any longer what you said a moment ago? That I wanted to get rid of you?

Fanny. Of course not. I don't think anything of the kind. I'm very fond of you. Yes, I am. [*She kisses her on the cheek.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You mustn't do that. You mustn't kiss me. I'm so rouged.

Fanny. Are you? Where? You shouldn't do it. You're much nicer without.

Mrs. Gihle. Won't you go and sit down, child?

Fanny. You shouldn't use rouge. And now I can see it rubs off.

Mrs. Gihle. It was that savage, Per Bast, who did it.

Fanny. [*Letting Mrs. Gihle go reluctantly.*] I suppose so. [*She sits down.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Smiling.*] You didn't like to hear me say that?

Fanny. What does it matter to me?

Mrs. Gihle. Not at all, of course. You're engaged, aren't you? And you're very fond of your fiancé?

Fanny. Yes, I am.

Mrs. Gihle. Won't it be lonely for you here, when he goes abroad? Wouldn't you rather go with him?

Fanny. Yes, I would. Especially as Per Bast suggested it.

Mrs. Gihle. I think it would be the best thing to do.

Fanny. Do you? So do I! It's so nice of you to think so.

Mrs. Gihle. Did you ever speak to Alexander before about going out with him?

Fanny. No. I hadn't met Per Bast then. I mean—— Per Bast hadn't said I might.

Mrs. Gihle. Of course not. And he couldn't suggest it before he met you! He found you very fascinating, you know!

Fanny. Did he, really?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. It was quite amusing to see him. It did my old heart good. You've picked up your flowers again. Aren't they pretty?

Fanny. [*Putting them down.*] Yes. They are.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Going to a looking glass and dabbing her face with a handkerchief.*] Once I was just as young and fresh as you are now. Oh, yes, I was! Don't think I wasn't, for a moment. I'm not now, I know. But you'll be like this one day. We're all on the way to the scaffold,

as Fredriksen says. But of course he—— [*Both maids now come in with trays on which are bottles and glasses. To the first maid.*] Will you go upstairs to the small wardrobe in my room and bring me down the dresses I put away there? You'll find them on the right-hand side. [*To the second maid.*] And will you fill a bowl with water for these flowers? A large bowl, please. [*Both maids go out through the door leading to the kitchen.*] There is some wine here now. But I don't suppose——? [*Fanny shakes her head.*] Oh! there was no doubt about his being fascinated by you. Well, that's nothing to be ashamed of. He's a little grey—but what a savage he is! I shouldn't have reminded you of that.

Fanny. What things you say! [*To Blumenschøn, who now comes in from the hall.*] So there you are! [*She embraces him.*]

Blumenschøn. Yes. [*Freeing himself.*] Mrs. Gihle, you mustn't ask me about anything. On this subject my lips are sealed.

Mrs. Gihle. So are mine! I've no use for a country house now. [*A bell rings.*] That's the front door, Blumenschøn.

Blumenschøn. [*Going into the hall and opening the front door.*] So it's you at last, Lynum. Where's Bast? Won't you take off your coat?

Lynum. [*Comes in. He is wearing civilian clothes and an overcoat.*] Be quiet, can't you? [*Blumenschøn follows him in.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I'm glad you've come. You look very uneasy. And you've changed your things?

Blumenschøn. Where's Bast?

Lynum. Where do you think?

Blumenschøn. Where do I think?

Lynum. Where do *you* think, Mrs. Gihle?

Mrs. Gihle. I?

Lynum. [*To Fanny.*] And you?

Fanny. He ought to be all right again now. It's a long time since the snake bit him.

Lynum. Exactly! [*He is near the table and looks down at the glasses and bottles.*] Ugh! More grapes.

Mrs. Gihle. May I give you some? [*She pours out some wine for him.*] Where *is* Bast?

Lynum. In hospital. [*He drinks and sits down.*]

Blumenschøn. We don't want any more of your jokes.

Lynum. Will you be quiet? Fanny Norman saw Bast bitten by the snake not very long ago. And through other eyes than ours. When I got back to the hotel his hand and arm were blue. So I had him driven straight to hospital.

Blumenschøn. Are you sure it wasn't you, and not the snake, that bit him?

Lynum. If you're anxious to know, I didn't get a chance. He was too bad when I got back.

Fanny. [*Breaking in.*] Can't he be saved? Do you hear me? Can't he be saved?

Lynum. They're doing all they can for him. Of course he can be saved. So far as I know.

Fanny. You didn't make sure before you came away?

Lynum. You're angry with me. Well, I'm angry with myself. [*He looks at his watch.*]

Fanny. If you hadn't taken away the revolvers he wouldn't have been bitten.

Mrs. Gihle. But he'd have fired. And what would the public downstairs have thought? [*Both maids come in from the kitchen, one with the flower-bowl and the other with the dresses.*] Thank you. Will you put the dresses there, please? They'll be fetched away soon. [*To Fanny.*] There! now you can put your flowers in water. [*The maids go out again.*]

Lynum. [*Who has been looking at his watch: to Mrs. Gihle.*] May I use your telephone?

Mrs. Gihle. Certainly. It's in the dining room.

Lynum. I only just wanted—— [*He goes off through the first door on the right.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I think he wants to telephone to the hospital. He's very upset.

Fanny. Still, he wasn't too upset to change his clothes.

Mrs. Gihle. He must have had some reason for getting out of uniform. At least, I suppose so.

Blumenschøn. I'm the only person who really has cause to be upset. My whole future's at stake. [*The door at the back is opened by the first maid. Gihle is seen in the hall coming down the stairs. He is followed by Teodor. Aron Gislesen comes last.*]

Gihle. [*Mumbling.*] You should never go downstairs too fast. I never do. You know that too, Cousin Teodor? [*They come in.*] Good evening, everyone. Don't get up. Excuse my leaving you. But business comes first, you know. This gentleman [*pointing to Gislesen*] came here to discuss

the most important business with me. Cousin Teodor will tell you that. [*To Fanny.*] I'm glad to see you here. [*He shakes hands with her.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Introducing her.*] Fanny Norman.

Gihle. [*Bowing.*] Very kind of you to come. Especially on a day like this. A day of festivities, if I may call it so.

Fanny. [*Curtsying.*] I wish you many happy returns of the day.

Gihle. A thousand thanks. I'm glad to see you curtsy to an old man like me. It shows you're a well-brought-up girl. Young folk usually don't do such things nowadays. Sit down, please. You won't? [*Looking round for a chair.*] Because I'm standing? A miracle, in this century! People forget they should honour the old.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Getting him a chair.*] There! [*Gihle and Fanny sit down.*]

Gihle. Thank you, Juliane. Still, I mustn't complain about the young people, must I, Juliane? It was quite right of you to come in from the garden. The whole time I was lying down—I mean sitting upstairs—I thought of you freezing out there.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To the others.*] Won't you all sit down? [*Teodor and Gislesen do so.*]

Gihle. Sit down, gentlemen. Yes, I thought of you all freezing out there. Even in the middle of some most important business.

Mrs. Gihle. We've been further away than the garden, Father. We went to Per Bast's hotel, to see some specimens he'd brought with him from South America.

Gihle. Did you? Quite right. But I don't see Per-Bast here now. And where is Lieutenant Lynum?

Mrs. Gihle. Telephoning. In there. Won't you have something to drink? [*She pours out some Tokay.*]

Gihle. That's what we came for. To drink one another's healths and seal the bargain. Cousin Teodor, don't you let your tongue run away with you. I know you. But we must keep our secret to ourselves. [*He clinks glasses with Gislesen.*] Your health! Here's to all of you! [*They drink.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Per Bast had a snake, Father. A poisonous snake. And while we were there it bit him. They had to take him to hospital for treatment.

Gihle. What's that? I'm sorry such a thing should have happened while you were there. It's really most deplorable. And I'm very sorry for the young man. He was no chess-player, I admit; but all the same I took a liking to him. He'll have his hand in a sling for weeks.

Blumenschøn. He'll be lucky if it's no worse.

Gihle. I can believe it. And he was quite young too. [*Lynum comes back and greets Gihle.*]

Blumenschøn. Did you get through? How is he?

Lynum. They can say nothing yet. Who is it you're asking about?

Fanny. About Bast, of course. How is he getting on?

Lynum. I telephoned there too. They can't say yet. They're hoping for the best.

Gihle. What did I tell you? They'll give him some kind of treatment and he'll soon be all right again.

Fanny. Yes. They ought to be able to do that.

Gihle. [*To Fanny.*] Oh! You can believe me. I've had a lot of experience in these things. In a few hours he'll be convalescent. We needn't be anxious about him any longer. [*Jokingly to Lynum.*] I saw you coming out of the dining room, Lynum. You're all over the place.

Lynum. I was using the telephone.

Gihle. Oh, you needn't explain, or I shall get to know too much about you. That's all right. Now go and take off your coat. I've a little surprise for all of you.

Lynum. Excuse me one moment. [*He goes into the hall to discard his overcoat. He returns at once and sits down.*]

Gihle. Juliane! I certainly must repeat the warning I gave you this evening about cavalrymen. [*He laughs. To Gislesen.*] Was it four hundred acres of timber?

Gislesen. Yes. Four hundred acres.

Gihle. Four hundred acres. A real property. I only wanted to be quite clear about it. Well, as no one seems to want to say anything [*Lynum looks at his watch and gets up*], and Cousin Teodor doesn't seem to want to either, perhaps you'll all listen to me for a minute. [*Lynum sits down again.*] No one's anxious to let out this secret, so I suppose I shall have to. It's my birthday to-day too, so I suppose I ought to speak. [*Lynum gets up, and looks helplessly at Mrs. Gihle, who nods; he then escapes unobtrusively by way of the dining room door.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Going to Gihle.*] You must excuse Lieutenant Lynum now, Father. He's very anxious.

Gihle. Still, it isn't very polite of him, is it? To go just when the hero of the Jubilee was on the point of proposing a health. That's the way young people behave

nowadays. [*Mrs. Gihle takes out her handkerchief.*] What is it?

Mrs. Gihle. Just a moment. You've got some egg on your chin.

Gihle. Oh! Have I? Listen, Juliane. I wish you'd speak a little more respectfully to me. You know quite well that if I have anything on my——

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I know.

Gihle. Anyway, you might have told me in a more affectionate way. At least, that's what I thought.

Mrs. Gihle. You must excuse us all now. We're so anxious about Per Bast.

Gihle. Well. That's quite as it should be. It does you credit. But to-day I've transacted some very important business. I've bought a country house. [*To Gislesen.*] I think the best thing will be for us to go into the study and drink to the bargain in peace. [*Gislesen and Teodor get up.*] But, Juliane, remember this. I don't want any details or information of any kind to get out. At least, not yet.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Taking Gihle by the arm and going with him to the door on the left.*] Tell us about it later, Father, when we're not so anxious about Per Bast. You must tell us everything then.

Gihle. Yes. You know quite well, Juliane, that I do sometimes get angry and flare up. You know that, child, don't you? But you did say that about the egg, didn't you? [*He takes out his handkerchief and rubs his chin.*] Is it there still?

Mrs. Gihle. No. It's gone.

Gihle. I ought to have thanked you for telling me about it. This way, gentlemen.

Gislesen. [*To Blumenschøn.*] May I have a word with you later? I mean, before you go?

Blumenschøn. [*Looking up at him with indifference.*] All right. Have you fetched those things yet?

Gislesen. Yes. I took away what I could find. [*Gislesen and Teodor follow Gihle out through the door on the left. Mrs. Gihle takes some glasses and bottles in to them, and comes back immediately.*]

Blumenschøn. [*To Fanny.*] That was the man I sold the things to.

Fanny. [*Going over to Mrs. Gihle.*] Might I go in there and listen? [*She points to the dining room.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. Do. And calm Lieutenant Lynum if you can. He needs it. [*Fanny goes into the dining room.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Calling after her.*] Fanny, what do you want in there? [*She has disappeared.*] It's very foolish of you. Anyone might think *I'd* been bitten.

Mrs. Gihle. Why shouldn't she be a little anxious about him?

Blumenschøn. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Why not? But the only person she's any call to be anxious about, is me.

Mrs. Gihle. Lynum is very upset. He seems to put all the blame on himself. I am sorry for him.

Blumenschøn. Are you sorry for me?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. For you too. No, not for you, because you're going to leave us. Alexander! [*She throws herself at his feet.*]

Blumenschøn. Get up! Get up! Someone might come. Don't you hear me?

Mrs. Gihle. I don't care if they do. Everyone shall know that I love you. Because soon it will all be over.

Blumenschøn. Let me get up! [*He does so.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Getting up too.*] No. Sit down again. I'll go. [*Throwing herself into a chair.*] You usedn't to forbid me to show my love for you. Is that what you're thinking now?

Blumenschøn. [*Sitting down.*] What am I to say? There's a time for everything. We're not alone here now.

Mrs. Gihle. But you used to let me show I cared for you when we weren't alone. You wouldn't have liked me to have been so careful then.

Blumenschøn. What am I to say to that?

Mrs. Gihle. What are you to say? You thought differently about me in those days. Can't you understand that I've not changed? It's true: it's terribly true. And why? I feel now that I can't live without you. Yes, that I can't live without you. And you used to feel like that about me once.

Blumenschøn. There's nothing to be done now, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. Can't you see I'm not one of those who change? Nor were you, once. Don't you remember how fascinated you were? Oh! You seemed dangerously fond of me. You used to sit and devour me with your eyes: you wanted me *so much.* Do you remember my asking you once why you pulled up your chair so close to mine? And how you answered that you wanted so much to touch the sleeve of my blouse. And I asked you whether you wanted

to so *very* much? That's how it began. How delightful it all was.

Blumenschøn. Yes, it was, Juliane. And I must thank you for it.

Mrs. Gihle. But now it's over. Why should it be? I hope against hope that this won't be the end. I wait and hope for one thing—for one thing only. Because I am as I always was, I cannot change. I never have done, it is always the others who have changed. I would have married my first love. But he had a royal crest on his carriage door. Oh! it began all wrong, and it's been going wrong ever since for that very reason. Now *you* are going, and you're the last. I know you'll tell me it's high time for us to part. But have we really quarreled? Good Heavens! Do you think I forget how often we've disagreed! But what of it? It's been my fault, and we've always made it up very soon. And how sweet we always were to one another—afterwards.

Blumenschøn. Yes.

Mrs. Gihle. You must be mad. I never could have believed it. May I come to you to-night?

Blumenschøn. You can't. I haven't even a chair for you to sit on.

Mrs. Gihle. I want to say good-bye to you. You must come back here later!

Blumenschøn. Sh! [*They both listen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I want to say good-bye to you—just once more. It's been a bad day for me, to-day. But why couldn't I be alone with you to-night? I hate all the other women, I wish they were all dead. Alexander, I'm so jealous of

them, I could cry out. What do they want with us? It isn't only that I'm jealous of you, but that I love you more than anything else on earth. I'm jealous of everyone, old and young. And I can't endure it. That's how I'm made. It's not only to-day; it's always—every day. Can't you see that it will be unbearable for me when you go?

Blumenschøn. You'll get over it. Besides, you're married now.

Mrs. Gihle. Did you want me to be foolish into the bargain? No. And now you're hurt because I'm not jealous of *you* only. I know it's all the worse for women who grudge other women anything—a smile, a word. And that's how I feel.

Blumenschøn. And you don't conceal it. You've made *me* very uncomfortable more than once to-night.

Mrs. Gihle. I do many silly things, Alexander dear.

Blumenschøn. [*Maliciously.*] But no one is so generous to others as you are.

Mrs. Gihle. No. I'm only generous to you.

Blumenschøn. Oh? But you let yourself be kissed in the hall, and you told Per Bast that he could take you.

Mrs. Gihle. Did I? But it all happened so quickly. He kissed me the way you do. No, not like that. Not really like that at all.

Blumenschøn. I can't contradict you there. I bow before your expert knowledge. Now we're settling old scores again.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, Alexander. I say things I don't mean, and make you cross with me. But be angry with me, it's better than nothing. At least, you speak to me.

Blumenschøn. Have you forgotten how you behaved tonight? What you did when that beast of a nigger came in? And how you pulled up your dress and danced with that wretched Fredriksen?

Mrs. Gihle. Did I? I only meant to pull it up a very little. Of course I shouldn't have done it.

Blumenschøn. And then you got hysterical. And shouted out that you were the Beautiful Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes, I remember. And you sat there the whole evening and wouldn't have anything to do with me. That's why I shouted.

Blumenschøn. Yes. At the top of your voice. You weren't embarrassed. Only concerned with what the public might think about you. But they wouldn't have dreamed of thinking anything if you hadn't been a certain Juliane, a certain beautiful Juliane! You didn't mind that. No, you were proud of it. There you stood, looking at us, revelling in your past, in your shame!

Mrs. Gihle. It was very wrong of me. I should have restrained myself. I tried, but I couldn't. It was that wretched hotel. The air there, the smell on the stairs, the smoke of the cigars. But since I married I've been better than I was, Alexander. I've changed a great deal. I'm sure I didn't pull up my dress far.

Blumenschøn. Far enough. And the very fact of knowing such a man as Fredriksen was more than enough. And you did know him. And you asked him to come here to fetch away some frocks of yours! I'm very glad I've the address of a ranch in the Argentine.

Mrs. Gihle. If you don't want him to, Fredriksen

needn't come in here. He can be given the things in the kitchen.

Blumenschøn. [*Laughing.*] Let him come in. Keep him here, if you like. I'm only waiting for a messenger, that's all!

Mrs. Gihle. Is that all you're doing here, Alexander? On our last evening? Your tastes suit your character—you only interest yourself in antiques. No, I mean——

Blumenschøn. [*Laughing.*] You make the most witty remarks, unconsciously.

Mrs. Gihle. Sometimes I make slips. And you take advantage of them to be witty at my expense. I'm not as young as you are, you're right there. What then? I blush to think how right you are to-night. You don't think so but I do all the same.

Blumenschøn. Why do you take it like that, Juliane?

Mrs. Gihle. It's over now. You must forgive me. [*The first maid comes from the kitchen.*]

First Maid. There's someone outside who would like to speak to you, sir.

Blumenschøn. [*Getting up.*] It's the messenger.

Mrs. Gihle. Show him in, will you?

First Maid. Supper is served, madame.

Mrs. Gihle. Thank you. And please take those dresses into the kitchen. A man will call for them; they are for his daughter. You can tell him from me, that she needn't have them taken in at the waist. She is no slighter than I am, and if she alters them she'll only spoil them.

First Maid. Yes, madame. [*She takes the dresses and goes out into the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You've eaten nothing. I don't think Lieutenant Lynum will have anything, but you might.

Blumenschøn. Don't talk about eating. I'm trembling at the thought of this messenger! [*Two young men are shown in from the kitchen. One of them carries a small parcel with very great care. They bow.*] So there are two of you? Why didn't you come before?

Messenger. [*Holding up the parcel.*] We couldn't. The jeweller has been making a very careful examination so that there shall be no mistake. May I hand this back to you now, sir? [*He hands the parcel to Blumenschøn with the very greatest care.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Undoing it.*] Thank you. It's a pipe, a Turkish pipe. What did the jeweller say?

Messenger. He told me to tell you that it was of the greatest value.

Blumenschøn. What?

Messenger. Of the greatest value. That was why he sent both of us with it.

Blumenschøn. The greatest value?

Messenger. Yes, sir.

Blumenschøn. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Did you hear that? It's a pipe I got somewhere or other. I don't know where I picked it up.

Mrs. Gihle. Thank Heaven for that! You'll be independent of Bast and the Argentine now.

Blumenschøn. [*To the two men.*] Thank you for the trouble you've taken. I'm much obliged to you both.

Mrs. Gihle. Aren't you going to give them something? So that they can make an evening of it? It's worth it.

Blumenschøn. Yes, of course. But I haven't any change.

Mrs. Gihle. I have. [*She goes to the bureau.*]

Blumenschøn. I've only these notes.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To the men.*] Thank you. [*She gives them a note and opens the door leading into the hall.*] This way. [*The two men bow and go out. Mrs. Gihle comes in again.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Who saw the note Mrs. Gihle gave them.*] Oh! I had one that size. I've got three thousand crowns here. [*Pause.*] Of the greatest value, that's what he said!

Mrs. Gihle. [*Going up to him.*] Well, Alexander, are you going to stay now?

Blumenschøn. Stay?

Mrs. Gihle. You needn't go and earn money so far away. Now you've got money here.

Blumenschøn. [*Packing up the Nargileh again.*] What's that? No, I shall sail anyhow. Whether Bast lives or dies: I want to get away.

Mrs. Gihle. No, you don't. Stay with me!

Blumenschøn. You mustn't talk like that any longer. I won't have it. You've got to understand that I want to get away from all this. Don't press me to say anything more.

Mrs. Gihle. I'll ask you when you come back to-night. [*Fanny comes in; she is followed by Lynum. He goes to the back and stands quite still. He is very pale.*]

Blumenschøn. How is he now?

Fanny. He's dead! [*Mrs. Gihle clenches her fists.*]

Blumenschøn. Dead? [*They are all silent.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Couldn't they have saved him by amputation?

Lynum. [*Suddenly coming forward.*] They tried to, but it was no use. It was his right arm.

Mrs. Gihle. Come here, Lynum. You must be calm. We must all be calm. [*She pours out some wine for him.*]

Lynum. Yes. I know. Grapes. Grapes. For the last time. [*He drinks.*]

Blumenschøn. I'm the most unlucky man in the world. If he hadn't given me the address of the ranch in the Argentine, what should I have done?

Fanny. But you've got the address?

Blumenschøn. You're sympathetic, Fanny. Who are you mourning for? We must all pull ourselves together.

Lynum. I wasn't on good terms with him, I know. And I had a reason. I suppose we've got to be calm. It began this evening out there in the garden, by the fountain. It's all so strange.

Mrs. Gihle. Sit down. [*She gets him to sit down.*]

Blumenschøn. Yes, we've got to keep cool. But now he's dead, I must admit that I was angry with myself for talking so much to him. He was nothing but a cursèd Indian, after all.

Fanny. How can you say such a thing, Alexander?

Blumenschøn. [*In a louder voice.*] What?

Mrs. Gihle. I thought we were going to keep calm.

Blumenschøn. Am I the only person who's got to do that? But it doesn't matter. I'm going; and you can all do what you like. My kind regards to your husband. And many thanks for this evening. [*He offers her his hand.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You said you'd speak to Gislesen before you went.

Blumenschøn. Oh, yes, I did.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Opening the door on the left.*] Will you come in here a moment, Gislesen? [*Gislesen comes in.*]

Blumenschøn. [*Who has been waiting for him: puts the Nargileh down again.*] What do you want?

Gislesen. It's a small matter. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] Excuse me. [*To Blumenschøn.*] I've fetched all those things away from your house. All those I could find.

Blumenschøn. I see.

Gislesen. [*Producing the catalogue and pointing to it.*] But one small thing missing. [*Points.*] That! It's catalogued at five-and-twenty crowns. You must have taken it away.

Blumenschøn. [*Laughing.*] Yes. I took that small thing away worth five-and-twenty crowns. You're quite right. And this is it. [*He unpacks the Nargileh.*] But perhaps it's worth five-and-twenty *thousand* crowns!

Gislesen. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Then I shall sue you for it.

Mrs. Gihle. What?

Gislesen. At once.

Blumenschøn. [*Smiling.*] Don't do that. It would be sure to come out that you were trying to swindle me over it.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Gislesen.*] You won't gain anything by that.

Gislesen. We shall see.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Blumenschøn.*] He seems very sure of himself. What does he mean?

Blumenschøn. He's impertinent.

Fanny. Why are you so interested in all this, Mrs. Gihle?

Blumenschøn. [*To Fanny.*] It's more than you are. My good or bad fortune doesn't seem to matter to you. [*To Gislesen.*] Listen to me. It's quite true that this pipe figures in the catalogue at twenty-five crowns. But it's a mistake; it never should have appeared there at all. If you'll cross it out, that will be an end of the matter.

Gislesen. But I paid three thousand crowns for *all* your things. The pipe included.

Blumenschøn. Anyone will admit I made a mistake. I might just as well have put down "one house and garden" for five-and-twenty crowns. That would have been much the same thing.

Gislesen. Not at all. Because in that case I shouldn't have bought anything.

Blumenschøn. Let me tell you this. Before you get this pipe, the whole business will have to be re-transacted.

Gislesen. Not at all. On no account.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Uneasily.*] I can't follow it all. Excuse me a moment: I want to see if everything's ready for supper. [*She goes into the dining room.*]

Gislesen. Before anyone else leaves this room I should like to ask you voluntarily to hand over my property. Property I've bought and paid for.

Blumenschøn. You're taking yourself very seriously. I'm not *going* to hand over this pipe. Do you understand me? But I'll give you back your twenty-five crowns.

Gislesen. I won't take them.

Blumenschøn. Just as you like. [*There is a silence.*]

Gislesen. I wasn't prepared for this, I must say—— I can hardly understand it. Most people go out of their way to look after such valuable things. And you're an experienced and successful dealer in antiques.

Blumenschøn. [*Bowing ironically.*] Thank you.

Gislesen. After all, you began with nothing. [*Pause.*] They told me at your house that you were going away?

Blumenschøn. Day after to-morrow, if not before.

Fanny. Where are you going now, without Bast?

Blumenschøn. What do you think will become of Alexander Blumenschøn, now a certain Bast is no more? [*To Gislesen.*] What is it you want to ask me?

Gislesen. Nothing very much, really. It only occurred to me that, now I've sold the house and can extend my business, you're a man I might be able to work with.

Blumenschøn. What?

Gislesen. Don't misunderstand me. I mean as a partner.

Blumenschøn. What? [*Starting to laugh.*] Thanks for the offer. Splendid! Wonderful! But I'm going far away from here.

Fanny. Where are you going? You ought to tell me.

Blumenschøn. To the Argentine, of course; where else should I be going? I've got the address. One man's death is another man's livelihood.

Fanny. But you can't go now?

Blumenschøn. Oh, yes. I shall go under any circumstances. Even if everyone here tries to stop me. Is that quite clear? [*To Gislesen.*] And another thing: I happen to be a Blumenschøn in this little country. And my

name and position force me to be very careful in the choice of a partner.

Gislesen. What am I to understand by that?

Blumenschøn. I can't go into partnership with you. It might come out what kind of partner I had.

Fanny. Alexander!

Gislesen. [*Looks at the catalogue, then at Blumenschøn. He turns over the pages, takes a few steps, and then turns over the pages again. His hands tremble a little.*] It might also come out what kind of partner *I* had! What sort of man *you* were!

Blumenschøn. [*Holding up his hand.*] That's quite enough of this foolishness. Do you want me to throw you out? I can easily do it. I'm strong enough in the arm for that.

Gislesen. Then I'll call Mrs. Gihle. She's quite strong enough to stop you.

Blumenschøn. What do you mean?

Gislesen. You know her arms? She's carried you in them. She has fed and clothed you, and she has bought antiques of you. I've been the middleman. If I've sold things to you for six crowns, I've bought them back again for fifty. Of course they were all for Mrs. Gihle's account.

Fanny. No? What's all this?

Blumenschøn. Lies. Don't believe him. Are you mad?

Gislesen. Every word of it is true. You can't deny it.

Blumenschøn. [*Going over to him.*] Yes, I can. You shall get out of here now.

Gislesen. [*Opens the dining room door and bows.*]

Mrs. Gihle! [*Mrs. Gihle comes in.*] This man forced me to tell him——

Mrs. Gihle. Are you still arguing?

Blumenschøn. [*To Mrs. Gihle.*] That dealer you once recommended to me is pretending to let out secrets about me.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Gislesen.*] What? You promised me, you swore to me——

Gislesen. He forced me to do it.

Blumenschøn. I hear you've been buying antiques from me—with that man as go-between—simply in order to provide me with my daily bread. Is that true?

Gislesen. [*Going over to him.*] Dare you deny it? I can bring proofs. [*Blumenschøn stares at him.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Sitting down.*] But Blumenschøn didn't know about it. He knew nothing at all. It's all my fault.

Gislesen. [*Going back.*] But he *did* know about it!

Mrs. Gihle. [*Getting up.*] I say he didn't! Why don't you answer, Alexander? Don't you hear what the man says? Answer him, won't you? [*To Gislesen.*] What's that you say? [*She throws herself into a chair.*]

Gislesen. I've plenty of proofs, and they can be produced. He's forcing me to say this.

Blumenschøn. You shall all see what I'm going to do now. [*He takes up the roll of notes and throws it on to the table.*] There lie the celebrated three thousand crowns I had of you to-day!

Mrs. Gihle. Don't do that. [*To Gislesen.*] Don't take any notice of what he says.

Blumenschøn. But I must, now that I know how mat-

ters stand. Don't you agree with me, Fanny? [*Fanny merely looks at him.*]

Gislesen. [*To Blumenschøn.*] You shouldn't strip yourself like that. Not of everything. Don't give back what would keep you for two years. Now about the Turkish pipe.

Blumenschøn. This is all very unpleasant for you, Fanny. Wouldn't you rather go home? Shall I get you a cab? [*He goes to the door of the dining room. To Mrs. Gihle.*] May I telephone for one?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Rises and also goes to the door of the dining room.*] I will. Let me.

Fanny. [*Getting up.*] It doesn't matter. I'll walk home. [*She picks up her flowers.*] I've put two rings here on the table. One for each of you. [*She walks slowly to the door at the back and goes out.*]

Mrs. Gihle. She's giving me back my ring. There are two rings here.

Blumenschøn. The other one's mine, I think. [*Calling out.*] Fanny, you shouldn't do things like this. [*He goes after her and speaks into the hall.*] It's all nothing but lies. Don't you understand? [*Fanny is seen putting on her cloak and leaving through the front door. This door is then heard to bang.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Has she gone? [*Blumenschøn comes back and sinks into a chair.*] She's quite right. I can't let things slip away from me; but she's always doing it.

Blumenschøn. You've got me into a pretty mess between you. [*Pointing to Gislesen.*] Fancy trusting a man like that! And you, Lynum, you're a useful comrade. Is this

all the thanks I get for looking after you? You were very taken up by Fanny all the evening, and you made yourself very pleasant; but now you don't say a word.

Lynum. No. And I shan't say anything more. I've done.

Blumenschøn. And she's gone.

Lynum. That's what I was waiting for. It didn't matter what I did—till she went. Now I've nothing more to wait for. [*He gets up, goes over to Mrs. Gihle, and gives her his hand.*] Good night, Mrs. Gihle. I forgot something in the garden just now. By the fountain; it was only quite a small thing. Well, good night! [*He goes out through the door at the back.*]

Mrs. Gihle. I don't know what's the matter. Everyone seems to be getting so strange. I wonder what he meant by that.

Blumenschøn. What does it matter what he meant? Now I haven't even money for the journey.

Mrs. Gihle. But you're not going now?

Blumenschøn. [*Getting up.*] If they strip me to the skin I'll sail. Even if I have to sell this [*he holds up the Nargileh*], still I'll sail.

Gislesen. You can't sell that. I shall sue you for it.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Gislesen.*] You've done harm enough here. Will you please go now?

Gislesen. [*Bowing.*] In a moment, madame. I'm only waiting for my property. [*A report is heard in the garden.*]

Mrs. Gihle. What's that?

Blumenschøn. A shot!

Mrs. Gihle. No. Was it?

Blumenschøn. What else could it be? Do you want me to find out—at a moment like this? I don't get much sympathy, do I? [*To Gislesen.*] Aren't you going?

Gislesen. I'm waiting for my property. There it is.

Blumenschøn. [*Raging.*] It's mine, I tell you. [*Banging the table with his fist.*] Mine.

Gislesen. It *was* yours. But I bought it of you. Who did you get it from?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Turning to Blumenschøn.*] Answer the man, tell him! Defend yourself.

Blumenschøn. I don't see why I should. I happened to come across the pipe, and I bought it. I got it from someone, a sailor I think, who used to be in the Levant.

Mrs. Gihle. [*To Gislesen.*] You hear what he says!

Gislesen. Mrs. Gihle, do you think the police will believe all that?

Mrs. Gihle. The Police? [*Going to Blumenschøn.*] Good Heavens! I won't allow a scandal and have the police called in. Tell him that!

Blumenschøn. Let him call in the police.

Mrs. Gihle. You can say that! But what will the police think about me?

Gislesen. [*Bowing.*] That madame keeps bad company, that's all!

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. That's just it. [*Decisively.*] And I don't. [*To Blumenschøn.*] You say nothing? You're not defending yourself? Why don't you? [*To Gislesen.*] Very well. I shall have to speak. It's all my fault. I took the pipe with me. I left it there one day. The pipe is my property.

Gislesen. [*Bowing.*] That is a different matter, madame.

Mrs. Gihle. The pipe's mine. I left it behind me when I went. Don't be angry with me for that, Alexander. I meant well by it. The pipe was given me by a rich man, a pasha. It belongs to no one but me.

Blumenschøn. What made you do it? Why did you leave it at my house without saying a word about it? What a mess you've got me into! [*He sinks into a chair.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Don't be angry. I didn't dare tell you, I was afraid you wouldn't accept it. That you'd refuse it. I left it a little while ago, it was one Friday evening. It was light at the time, but I found a dark place for it. I remember your saying: "Don't make fingermarks on the bureau over there!" And I said I wouldn't. My hands were shaking as I hid it. That's the whole truth of it; and there's no reason to call in the police or start any scandal. [*To Gislesen.*] I want to tell you this: I never thought *you* were going to open your mouth. After all, my husband has done a great deal of business with you. It's all very horrible: I really don't know what to think.

Blumenschøn. But you're putting me in a worse position still by saying all this. I'm just realizing that you've been giving me my keep for years past.

Mrs. Gihle. No. That's not true. It was all my fault, everything. What was I to do? If you made enough money—a good deal of money—I thought you mightn't go away. You wouldn't have to go to the Argentine to earn it, I thought. Oh, Alexander, I thought so much, *so* much

about it. [*She sits down and covers her face with her hands.*]

Gislesen. That's another matter. [*Bowing.*] I hope madame will excuse me. I never dreamed for a moment that the pipe came from you. [*Pointing to Blumenschøn.*] But *he* ought to have thought of that at once. [*He bows and goes into the study.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Did you hear what he said? You don't answer? Perhaps he was lying?

Blumenschøn. Supposing the pipe had been sold for twenty-five crowns! Just because you wouldn't speak!

Mrs. Gihle. Are we going to argue about that? Did you know where it came from? I ask you if the man's lying. Since you heard from the jeweller, did nothing strike you? After all, it's a thing of great value. And where do you suppose *I* got it?

Blumenschøn. I have my own explanation of that, of course.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Getting up.*] Deny it! You must deny it. You mustn't ask me to believe you think *that* of me! For Heaven's sake, Alexander.

Blumenschøn. I'll deny nothing. I don't want any deception between us. You know what I am.

Mrs. Gihle. Oh, God! It's only getting worse! [*She sinks into her seat.*]

Blumenschøn. You'll suspect me all the same whatever I deny.

Mrs. Gihle. A little—because you're hesitating so.

Blumenschøn. You've suspected for some time?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I have: for some time.

Blumenschøn. But all the same, you've tried to hold on to me? That's bad enough.

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. It's bad enough.

Blumenschøn. But *now* you're not going to try to hold on to me any longer? [*Mrs. Gihle doesn't reply.*] Are you?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Looking at him.*] What will you do now?

Blumenschøn. That doesn't matter to you. I'm going away.

Mrs. Gihle. You keep on saying so. But that will only put distance between us.

Blumenschøn. It'll put more than that. [*He gets up.*] Are you going to lend me this money?

Mrs. Gihle. No.

Blumenschøn. Thank you. [*He puts the notes in his pocket.*] May I consider the pipe as mine?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Getting up.*] Certainly not. I'm not so foolish as that.

Blumenschøn. Neither am I. [*He picks up the pipe.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You're not to take it! I warn you.

Blumenschøn. Warn me? Haven't you behaved in a rather peculiar way to-night? You let a cobra out of a box, and by fair means or foul you tried to get someone bitten to death. Isn't that all rather peculiar?

Mrs. Gihle. Do you really believe it? Haven't you the courage to——

Blumenschøn. Mrs. Gihle, I don't think it matters what we believe about one another. The question is, what will the police believe, and the eye-witnesses?

Mrs. Gihle. The police! [*She sinks on to a chair.*]

Blumenschøn. Still. We don't really need them, do we? We don't want a scandal. Now I shall have to go. There are a lot of things to arrange before I leave. And you're not trying to hold me here to-night, are you?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Without looking up.*] No. I'm not. [*Blumenschøn goes out by the door at the back. Gihle, Teodor and Gislesen enter from the left.*]

Gihle. Are you there, Juliane? We clinched the bargain with a drink, and we're all satisfied. Oh, yes! But now both Gislesen and Cousin Teodor think they ought to go. [*Looking round.*] How is it you're alone, Juliane?

Mrs. Gihle. [*Rising and speaking mechanically.*] They asked me to thank you for them and tell you they'd had to go.

Gihle. Yes. That's just like young people nowadays. They have no manners.

Mrs. Gihle. They didn't want to disturb you. But I was to thank you from all of them.

Gihle. Well. If you're satisfied, Juliane! It was considerate of them not to want to disturb us. Still I should have liked to have seen Bast. [*He yawns.*]

Mrs. Gihle. But Bast is dead. He died of a snake-bite. We heard that over the telephone.

Gihle. Juliane, you might have broken it to me a little more gently! I must say I'm shocked to hear it. [*To Gislesen and Teodor.*] He was a young friend of ours. That will give both of us something to think of to-night.

Gislesen. [*Bowing and taking leave.*] Thank you so much. [*Teodor shakes hands with Gihle and Mrs. Gihle.*]

Gihle. You've nothing to thank *me* for. You got me

the bill of exchange yourself. I'm very much obliged to you in the whole matter. [*To Teodor.*] I hope you'll come and see us again very soon, Teodor. I have something I should like to discuss with you. [*He follows Teodor and Gislesen into the hall and sees them out; he then comes back.*] Well, now we're alone at last, Juliane. On my birthday! I must say that everything's gone off splendidly, from first to last. But you've been very shocked by this death, Juliane; I can see that. So am I, I can hardly speak of it. What are we mortals to say? And now you and I have a country house to think about, a large estate with four hundred acres of timber.

Mrs. Gihle. Father, you're wonderful. [*Throws her arms round him.*] There's no one like you.

Gihle. What do you mean, child? We've so often discussed buying a country house that I think I owe it to you. And I found that to-day, on my seventieth birthday, I was prepared to do it. Cousin Teodor agreed with me that it was an excellent idea.

Mrs. Gihle. Aren't you tired? Let's sit down.

Gihle. Well, I think anybody else would have been. But I'm not. I'm very distressed at Bast's death. And I've had another idea, Juliane.

Mrs. Gihle. Have you?

Gihle. [*Smiling.*] The first one brought the other with it, Juliane, like a string of pearls. Well, I mustn't exaggerate, because it was really our friend Gislesen who suggested it. But I saw he was right at once. We must think it all over carefully to-morrow, Juliane, when you're not so tired. But I can ask you this much to-night. Shall

we buy a car or a carriage and pair? We must have one or the other to get to our new house.

Mrs. Gihle. What a splendid idea!

Gihle. [*Throwing himself back a little.*] I had a regular flow of ideas to-night. We must come to some agreement about it. As you know, I'm a conservative man.

Mrs. Gihle. Of course the carriage is more distinctive, unless you'd rather——

Gihle. That's exactly what I hoped and expected you'd say—kind as you are. Yes, I'm very much in favour of a carriage—a landau.

Mrs. Gihle. So am I. [*She goes to him and kisses him.*]

Gihle. Thank you, Julie, thank you. I'm very pleased, very pleased indeed. Sit down. Yes, a pair of horses and a landau. And of course a coachman. We must talk this over to-morrow; we must find a good one. Don't forget that, Juliane, and look out for someone. As for the horses, I've already got my eye on a pair. Gislesen told me about them; they're two thoroughbred blacks. [*The first maid comes in through the door leading to the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. [*Rising.*] What is it?

First Maid. Excuse me, madame. I thought——

Mrs. Gihle. You may clear away. [*The first maid goes out again.*]

Gihle. [*Getting up and yawning.*] Oh, well, taken on the whole it's been a most remarkable day from morning to night. A great day, a blessèd day .

Mrs. Gihle. You must be dreadfully tired, Father!

Gihle. I? Not a bit of it. Just now I was thinking

whether we couldn't go out to our new house and have a look at it to-night. But you couldn't manage it: I can see that. As far as I'm concerned, I could still do a great deal more; but you're a woman. Now, Juliane, you mustn't worry too much over Bast's death; or you won't be able to sleep. Will you promise me not to? [*Mrs. Gihle nods.*] Then I'll go upstairs now. You'll come up soon, Juliane, won't you, as usual? But I'll say good night to you now in case I should be asleep when you—— [*He stops at the door at the back.*] Don't forget that about finding us a really good coachman, Juliane. [*He goes out. The first maid comes in from the kitchen. She is closely followed by Fredriksen carrying the dresses and his violin case.*]

Fredriksen. [*Speaking over the maid's shoulder and getting her to turn round.*] Excuse me coming in this way. I won't make the same mistake going out. I must thank you, Mrs. Gihle, for all these beautiful things—frocks, cloaks, whatever they are. [*He starts holding them up one by one.*]

Mrs. Gihle. That's all right, Fredriksen.

Fredriksen. The maid told me they weren't to be taken in at the waist. I don't know what she means. My wife could never get any of them on anyhow.

Mrs. Gihle. No. Certainly she couldn't.

Fredriksen. She's really got very stout lately. And as for my daughter—well! I wish I could wear them in your honour.

Mrs. Gihle. That's quite all right, Fredriksen.

Fredriksen. And look at this. It's as thin as it could be.

Mrs. Gihle. [*Laughing slowly.*] Yes. Yes. [*Pause.*] Fredriksen, did you know that Per Bast, who was our host at the hotel——

Fredriksen. Yes. I heard just now. I met a messenger outside here and he told me about it. It ended unhappily. But I wasn't surprised, because I saw the snake bite him.

Mrs. Gihle. You saw it?

Fredriksen. Yes. With my own eyes. As a matter of fact I read it in the eyes of the young lady. She almost looked as if the snake had bitten *her*. Then I was told to go back into the music room; so I did the only thing I could. Played him a merry waltz to the last.

Mrs. Gihle. Life is full of evil. Won't you have a glass of wine, Fredriksen? [*She pours out some champagne.*] There. Things haven't gone too well with me to-night, I can assure you. This death is terrible. I lost an old friend.

Fredriksen. [*Drinking and bowing.*] My sympathy!

Mrs. Gihle. And I lost a new one too. A friend I was holding on to desperately; in spite of everything—everything.

Fredriksen. Have you really lost him?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes. I've lost everyone. It's going downhill with me again.

Fredriksen. But as long as you're alive you'll make new friends. I shall never have to play my waltz for you.

Mrs. Gihle. You think not? Won't you have another glass? [*She pours out a glass for him.*] Do you really think not? That comforts me a little. And sometimes I'm very depressed, Fredriksen.

Fredriksen. [*Laughing.*] So you used to be in the old days. "I'm going downhill, Fredriksen," you said to me some years ago. "It'll end up with a nigger." That's what you said. [*He laughs.*] It was a regular saying of yours then. But there would have been no life, no sunlight, no gaiety, no beauty in the world, if it hadn't been for you, Madame Juliane!

Mrs. Gihle. You think that? Oh! I'm too young to be thrown aside like this. [*Pause.*] And now we've bought a house in the country, and I shall have a carriage and pair. [*Suddenly.*] Do you know of a good coachman, Fredriksen?

Fredriksen. A coachman? Yes, to be sure. And he's waiting for you. Oh, Madame Juliane, "By night you sail like a star in the sky"! [*Picking up the dresses.*] I won't keep you any longer. There's someone in the kitchen who wants to see you. A messenger.

Mrs. Gihle. A messenger?

Fredriksen. Yes. Perhaps he wants to offer to be your coachman. He said he was a coachman. Oh! And I forgot to tell you—did you hear a shot out there a little time ago?

Mrs. Gihle. Yes.

Fredriksen. That was a mutual acquaintance of ours. He was in civilian clothes, on a bench, by the fountain.

Mrs. Gihle. Lieutenant Lynum?

Fredriksen. Yes. And he had a small hole in his head.

Mrs. Gihle. Good Heavens, Fredriksen, one tragedy after another! Did he shoot himself? I knew he meant to.

Fredriksen. Yes. I dare say that's what he meant to do.

Mrs. Gihle. And in our garden, where anyone could have seen it. What a scandal!

Fredriksen. No one saw it; not a soul. I heard a report as I passed, so I looked in, although it was dark and the lights were out. I found him sitting there, upright, with his head on his chest. I got the police to take him away in a cab.

Mrs. Gihle. Thank you, Fredriksen. Thank you.

Fredriksen. I would have played my waltz to him too, but it wasn't worth while: he was quite dead. Perhaps he was one of those who had outpaced his life. But don't let this depress you, madame: there are plenty of people left. [*He picks up his violin case.*]

Mrs. Gihle. Are you going now? Wouldn't you like to rest a little first?

Fredriksen. I'm anxious to get home; more anxious than for many a year. I'm taking a contribution to the maintenance of my family with me. My daughter will kiss me for it. At least, I don't know her well enough to be sure, but I think she will. And then I shall go into my little room and sit down and live through that kiss all over again. That's what I shall do. [*He gives Mrs. Gihle his hand.*] Thank you! Thank you for everything.

Mrs. Gihle. I shall come to another meeting of your Confederation very soon. It was so pleasant there.

Fredriksen. Will you? Our honorary member? Then you must stop your carriage at the front gate, so that we can all see you from the windows. You, and your car-

riage—and your coachman! [*He goes to the door leading into the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You might have sat down again after all.

Fredriksen. Thank you. But the messenger is still waiting to see you. We came in together.

Mrs. Gihle. What messenger is this ?

Fredriksen. Someone who brings you a greeting. I believe he said he brought a last greeting, or something of the kind. [*He is on the point of opening the door, but hesitates.*] I was nearly going out the wrong way again. I made that mistake before. You'll excuse me. [*He goes over to the door at the back.*] Oh, yes; he's bringing you the best of greetings. He told me he was bringing you himself. But I don't know what he meant by that!

Mrs. Gihle. Himself? [*She rings.*]

Fredriksen. That's what he said. Well—my very best thanks. [*He bows and goes out through the hall. The first maid comes in from the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Gihle. You can take this tray. Is there anyone out there who wants to see me?

First Maid. Yes, madame. There's a—— He said he had a message for madame.

Mrs. Gihle. Ask him to come in. [*The maid goes out with the tray. Mrs. Gihle paces up and down, and sighs with fatigue and dejection. Then she throws herself into a chair and looks at her hands. The Boy comes in from the kitchen and stands motionless. When Mrs. Gihle sees him, she rises and draws herself up to her full height.*]

Mrs. Gihle. The Negro Boy! [*She hides her face in*

her hands and stands for a few moments with her head bent. Then she lets her hands fall.] What do you want?

Boy. To bring you a last greeting. And I was told to tell you—that I was to bring myself.

Mrs. Gihle. [*After a moment's silence she walks slowly across to him.*] Welcome!

CURTAIN

839.823
H189lE

Hamsun, Knut
AUTHOR

In the grip of life.
TITLE

PT 8950 .H3 L52 1924

Hamsun, Knut, 1859-1952.

In the grip of life

OXFORD
BOOKS